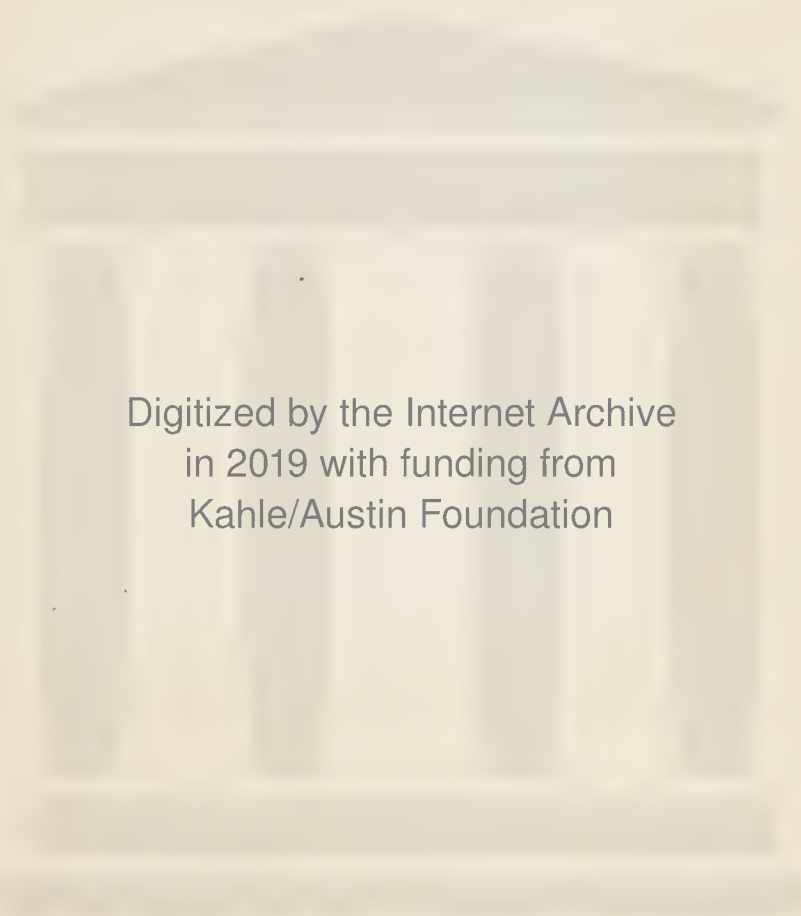


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JETTIE IRVING FELPS, B.A., M.A.

POPE'S COMMON SENSE

A THESIS

*Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of The
University of Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements*

*For the Degree of
Master of Arts*

*Expanded by Dr. L. W. Payne's Suggestion, and
omitting many footnotes, which are seldom used.*

By

JETTIE FELPS



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ONULP

DEDICATED TO

My husband, who made it possible for me to secure my Master's degree, then giving his family a trip through the Western states in a new Chevrolet, provided the author finished all her work and had her thesis accepted in one long term. They took the trip, realizing that travel is an education within itself.

PREFACE

Due to my mother's teachings, I have tried to find the better things of life, using as my guide the precepts of the Bible, taught me by a Christian mother. Those people who have been humanitarians and philanthropists have had most influence on what I would like to be, people like Mary Bethune, Jane Addams, Florence Nightingale, Booker T. Washington, people who worked against odds to help others to a better, richer life. Alexander Pope was one of these.

Since my first knowledge of Pope I have been one of his admirers, chiefly because of his ability to say so much in so few words, due to his common sense manner of viewing men and their work. I have used his poems, his letters, and the biographical material concerning him, directed by Dr. R. H. Griffith, under whom I wrote my thesis.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I	
In His Early Life	7
II	
In His Life-Work, Method, and Subject Matter	18
III	
In His Ideals and Religious Views	29
IV	
In His Choice of Friends	44
V	
In His Attitude Toward Women	65
VI	
With Regard to Politics	79
VII	
Under Fire of Opinion	87
VIII	
In His Letters	96
IX	
In His Poems	106

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Pope's Common Sense

I

IN HIS EARLY LIFE

Some critics might dispute the statement that Pope had common sense. De Quincey declares the "Essay on Criticism" to be "the feeblest and least interesting of Pope's writings, being substantially a mere versification, like a metrical multiplication table, of common places the most mouldy with which criticism has baited its rat-traps. The maxims, of no natural order or logical dependency, are generally so vague as to mean nothing," and so on. Leslie Stephen, too, speaks of Pope's skill "in polishing rather rusty sayings into the appearance of novelty" and of "coining aphorisms out of common-places." If one should agree with these two critics, he should doubt Pope's common sense as they must have done; but Courthope's conclusions seem more unbiased. He says that the art of criticism was not in existence in England when Pope wrote this essay on criticism. Of course criticism among opposing streams existed; but it took this essay, an attempt at criticism, to make of the thing an art. Leslie Stephen further speaks of some of Pope's "writings being stained with pruriency and downright obscenity;" he says that Pope always takes "a low, sometimes a brutal view of the relation between the sexes;" he declares that Pope, at times, is

"grossly indecent in his letters to men and showed the same tendency in his letters to women."

But I shall attempt to prove in the following discourse that Pope showed a very consistent common sense not only in his life, his life's ideals, his friendships, his religion, and his dealings with his enemies, but also in his letters and in his poetry. By common sense I mean one's ability to be able to reach sound, sane, wholesome conclusions concerning any and all phases of earthly existence. When Pope used the term in his writings, no doubt he took into consideration the definition accepted in 1726, as recorded in the Oxford dictionary; it is there defined as the ordinary ability to keep ourselves from being imposed upon by gross contradictions, palpable inconsistencies, and masked impostures. I am, however, not denying that Pope sometimes forgot to use his common sense; for there are few who are always consistent. Pope himself says:

"But show me one who has it in his power
To act consistent with himself an hour."¹

I am, perhaps, inconsistent when I take the subject: *Pope's Common Sense*; for in spite of the fact that I am prejudiced toward most Catholics and the Catholic religion, and feel a repulsion to deformity of any kind, I can lay my prejudice and feelings aside, and realize that Pope is one Catholic (perhaps in name only), deformed and misshapen, to whom I am willing to accord common sense.

While there were some influences in Pope's early life that tended to increase his native talents, there

¹.Imitations of Horace.

were others that undoubtedly proved great hindrances to his advancement. The age of his parents at his birth, about 46 years, may have had some significance with regard to his precocity. His having been the only child of his mother (his father had one daughter by his first wife) may have had quite an influence on his training; for Pope has been said to have had no childhood; he was thrown with elders from his birth. Having had the home comradeship of two elderly parents, who, from all accounts, almost idolized him, this condition may have caused Pope to choose elderly people as his associates and friends when he went out into life. The choice of friends, older than himself, showed a characteristic of sound judgment.² It is the giddy, light mind, the butterfly type, that sips now here, now there, that would care little for minds more developed than its own. Our Great Exemplar, at the age of twelve, was found listening to the words of the wise, words of men much older than himself, after he had become separated from his parents in the city of Jerusalem.

And besides these friendships of Pope's youth, his home at Binfield, in such a region as most poets would love, was an ideal place for the development of talent. For twenty-seven years the Popes resided quietly at Binfield; not far to the east was Windsor Forest.³ Where birch, oak, and elm once stood, trees under which Alexander Pope loved to wander and meditate, nothing now remains but a row of Scotch firs; farms, villages, and cottages dot the landscape which was at one time Pope's woodland retreat, a place for romantic

²In my chapter under "His Friends", I will show that these friendships were not accidental ones.

³Only one room, supposed to have been the poet's study, remains of the house on the twenty acres that the elder Pope once owned.

solitude, a rendezvous for those loving peace and quiet, as Pope did. According to poets, this was an ideal setting for a budding artist, whom all his biographers call a genius.

But to oppose these forces which tended to increase Pope's common sense, there were forces which compelled him to work all the harder to overcome them. We wonder how a person, with his weakened and pain-wracked body, could have accomplished so much, in his studies, in his translations, and in his original works! Dr. Johnson tells us, "Pope was from his birth of a constitution tender and delicate." Carruthers says, "He had inherited from his father a crooked body and from his mother a sickly constitution, perpetually subject to severe headaches." And then his studious habits only tended to weaken his already frail body. He tells us of his studies: "When I was about twelve years old, I received about all the teaching I ever had. I dipped into English, French, Italian, Latin, and Greek poets. This I did without any design, but that of pleasing myself. I was like a boy gathering flowers in the fields and woods. These five or six years I still look upon as the happiest part of my life." Here we have a boy of twelve years, studying for mere enjoyment!

But Pope had to suffer for delving too deeply into his studies; between his twelfth and seventeenth years, his health became impaired; in fact, he concluded that he was going to die, and he wrote letters of farewell to several of his friends; among them was one to Thomas Southcote, who consulted Radcliffe, the most famous physician of the day. Under Radcliffe's prescription Pope soon began to mend. He never forgot Southcote's services; twenty years later, being then in

Walpole's good graces, he procured an Abbey in France for him. Although Leslie Stephen has accused Pope of "casting friends aside" when they proved of no benefit to him, Pope certainly did not misuse Southcote. It is the common sense mind that does not forget to be grateful.

In spite, however, of Southcote's services and Pope's gratitude, the poet was never strong in after life. Mrs. Racket, the half-sister, helps to throw some light on Pope's constitution. She relates that while "he was a child in coats, a cow struck at him with her horns, tore off his hat, wounded him in the throat, and trampled upon him." It appears that his body was not then deformed. A cousin of Pope's told Spence that in a picture of Pope, taken when he was about ten years old, his face was round, plump, pretty, and of a fresh complexion, and that it was the perpetual application into which he fell, while he was in his twelfth year, that changed his form and ruined his constitution. He had a sweet disposition in his early years; and Southerne, the dramatist, says that this characteristic survived even during the vexations and the animosities of his declining years; Spence, however, tells us that he never laughed aloud in his later days. Laughter, however, is often the expression of a shallow mind; the fool laughs loudest. Pope evidently did not wish others to say of him:⁴

"Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,
As shallow streams run dimpling all the way."

Added to that of a sickly constitution, the religion of Pope's parents, who were Catholic, was another hindrance to a person seeking fame by writing; for

⁴Prologue to the Satires.

Catholics, in that day, were part of a hated minority, not really molested, but excluded from every position of honor or authority in a public career. And although Pope was himself not so strong a Catholic as his parents, he believed so strongly in the parents themselves that he was willing to accept and keep, at least in outward appearance, a religion that meant so much to them; and common sense demanded that he should resent any criticism against his parents, mostly spiteful flings, commonly the result of jealousy. And his parents must have been deserving of his love and respect; he watched over and cared for his mother, with a tender devotion, until her death in 1733, at the age of 93; and he could scarcely have paid his father a higher tribute than is expressed in these lines:⁵

“Unlearned, he knew no schoolman’s subtle art,
No language, but the language of the heart.
By nature honest, by experience wise,
Healthy by temperance and by exercise.
His life, though long, to sickness passed unknown;
His death was instant, and without a groan.
O grant me thus to live and thus to die!”

But however much Pope may have loved and respected his parents, the religion they imposed upon him in that time, made it only the harder for him; for Catholics had to pay a double tax; they were barred from schools and universities; and as late as 1744 Catholics were forbidden within ten miles of London, due to a proclamation of the Pretender’s arrival. This attitude, on the part of the government, must have embittered Pope. He had judgment enough to resent the unjustice of it all. Persecution usually engenders in the

⁵Prologue to the Satires.

mind of the oppressed a heroic resistance; it sometimes generates in its victims the use of any weapons to evade the tyranny of the oppressor. Trickery must be met with trickery; unjustness with unjustness; and criticism with its counter-weapon, sarcasm. It is the man with judgment who knows when he is trampled upon; the man with the mind of a moron, who knows not how to defend himself, is usually dominated by the superior mind; he necessarily does the odd jobs of life. Pope did not. Though physically repugnant, politically and religiously ostracized, and born in a humble social position, without adventitious favor, we see him, in spite of many bitter antipathies, become the acknowledged head of English literature, the welcome companion of the most eminent men of his time; and, through his pen, the winner of the highest pinnacle of contemporary fame; and all this was accomplished because of his ability to cope with any phase of life.

Pope's religion, as I have said, excluded him from schools, the most far-reaching opposing force of his parental religion. But since no schools were provided for him, Pope's common sense directed him. "Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Dryden, and Addison were all members of an English University: the three last had been educated in the great English public schools, in which they had acquired an early appreciation of the general principles of English society, and of the accepted standards of taste and language. Pope, on the other hand, lived all his early life in the solitude of Windsor Forest." But Pope "had from nature what others acquired by cultivation, a judgment preternaturally strong and penetrating, and an instinct of propriety hardly ever at fault." He decided that his want of public school training was no loss, since he had been forced to read for

the sense, not for mere words. It is the nature of common sense minds to try to make the best of circumstances. It is quite true that, since Pope could not attend school, he found more time for meditation; and his solitude, his moments of contemplative study and converse with writers, either dead or living, added substance to his already precocious mind. It is certain that this early life instilled into his being the love of quiet as opposed to festivity; and this love caused him later to regret that he must give up the "indolence, the silence, and the sauntering" that helped to make up his entire life near Windsor Forest. But in spite of the fact that he considered his lack of schooling no loss, there are few people who would agree with him.

A man like Pope is not to be kept down; he used ill health, religious persecution, and deprivation of common schools as stepping stones; they only helped to develop his character. He made friends both among Protestants and Catholics. Two friends and admirers of his youth that proved of value to Pope were William Trumbull and William Walsh. About the time Pope met them, he had written his *Pastorals*, probably before he was eighteen years of age. Sir George Granville, in a letter to a friend, writes at this time: "Wycherley shall bring with him, if you will, a young poet, newly inspired in the neighborhood of Cooper's Hill, whom he and Walsh have taken under their wing. His name is Pope, not above 17 or 18 years of age, and promises miracles. If he goes on as he has begun in the Pastoral way, as Virgil first tried his strength, we may hope to see English poetry vie with the Roman, and this swan of Windsor sing as the Mantuan." Now Sir George Granville (Lord Lansdown) speaks thus of Pope while the latter was still in bondage to the

ancients; Pope had never become independent enough to launch out upon his own originality; he had not yet learned to disregard the adverse criticism made concerning himself and his parents, nor could he forget his lowly station in life. He says:

“But to the world no bugbear is so great
As want of figure, and a small estate!”⁶

Although Pope did truly lament his lowly station in life, he loved the solitude of his quiet abode. He said that he had always “loved reading better than conversation and company.” And there is no wonder; the common, everyday form of conversation would cost a genius, perhaps, more fatigue than the composition of half a volume! Most common sense minds prefer reading to the average conversation. Though Pope’s early life was a solitary existence, he was never idle. His mornings were occupied with his studies; in the afternoon he took long, solitary walks; or perhaps, accompanied by his dog, he meditated in Priest’s Woods upon what he had been reading; and each day closed with an attempt to write down those ideas which crowded his imagination. In his twelfth year he wrote an “Ode to Solitude,” the title itself is suggestive of an unusual mind for a child of that age. The Ode first appears in a letter to Cromwell, July 17, 1709. Pope writes: “Having a vacant space here, I will fill it with a short Ode on Solitude (which I found yesterday by great accident, and which I find by the date was written when I was not yet twelve years old).” Though the Ode may have been an imitation, the title signifies an unusual subject for a lad of twelve. As Warton says,

⁶Imitations of Horace.

it shows a mind contemplative, reflective, and philosophic.

Another proof of Pope's judgment, common sense, and foresight was his method of using translations. He began translating as early as 1702. He preferred Statius, after Virgil. He studied Dryden and decided the couplet allowed the most epigrammatic capacity. He told Spence that he had learned versification wholly from Dryden's works. From 1700 to 1712 Pope was essentially an imitator. He believed success was more assured if a prospective writer would follow the ancients. He says, "Among the moderns, the success has been greatest who have most endeavored to make the ancients their patterns." He mentions that Spenser employed the lyric measure, which is contrary to the practice of the old poets. "This may be the reason", he says, "that his expression is sometimes not concise enough; for the tetrastic has obliged him to extend his sense to the length of four lines, which would have been more closely confined in the couplet." These ideas are found in "A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry," written when Pope was 16. And so we see he used common sense in deciding to use the heroic couplet. He closes the discourse with "If they⁷ have any merit, it is to be attributed to some good old author, whose works as I had leisure to study, so, I hope, I have not wanted care to imitate."⁷ Pope knew that good sense was shown in "The Canterbury Tales;" that Shakespeare entertained by appealing to the good sense of the audience; and that Homer, in an almost unlettered age, had described natural objects in a style sublime and tasteful, and so he took his system of reasoning from these writers, especially Homer. He passed on to Virgil, in a society much like his own, studying Homer

⁷His *Pastorals*.

attentively; moreover, he found the best critics of Greece and Rome, Aristotle and Quintilian, drawing material from ancient authors, and reasoning by natural good sense; he then concluded that nature and the mind of man remain unchanged through all ages, therefore, a law of taste; and that law lasts through all the ages: that PEOPLE CAN BE GUIDED BY COMMON SENSE AND TRUTH.

II

IN HIS LIFE-WORK, METHOD, AND
SUBJECT MATTER

Realizing his limitations as to health and deformity, Pope showed sound judgment in choosing as his life's work that of a literary career. In his *Moral Essays* he says:

"The Muse but served to ease some friend, not wife,
To help me through this long disease, my life."

He, as no other, knew what he could do or could not do. He meant to learn to compose by translating from the ancients and using them as models in writing down his own thoughts. He has been accused of almost ignoring nature in his writings and of dealing entirely with mankind. Since nature is only man's setting and something inanimate, a common-sense mind would naturally prefer to deal with man, who dominates and subdues the forces of nature. It is the mind of the sentimentalist, the delicately sensuous mind, that revels in raving about the beauties of nature; the common-sense mind might take note of the beauties and possibilities of nature, in so far as they influence man, but it spends little time in going into ecstasies about anything.

Pope, however, found pleasure in his life's work; he was one of those few whose labor is their pleasure. "He laboured his work first to gain reputation, and afterwards to keep it." He was not content to satisfy; he desired to excel. "He had perhaps the judgment of

Dryden, but Dryden certainly wanted the diligence of Pope." Pope's ambition to excel shows such a depth of thought that we can not imagine him as ever being able to "cut" classes and being answered for by another; his common sense let others know he was present, made him known to his contemporaries, and left him as a subject for future ages.

He tells us: "I confess that I made use of the judgment of authors, dead and living; that I omitted no means in my power to be informed of my errors, both by my friends and my enemies. If I have written well, let it be considered, that it is what no man can do without good sense, a quality that not only renders one capable of being a good writer, but a good man." Pope attempted to bring rhyme and sense together, and he succeeded. He believed if anything was good, it would defend itself; and whatever was bad, could never be defended. He once said that no writer is good that does not tend to better mankind in some way or other.

And how Pope has influenced me! I have tried to make common sense rule my life, unafraid of what public opinion might be. Pope says that good sense will not only help a person to become a good writer but also a good person, and that is my aim. If a small, deformed person, legislated against because he was a Catholic, is read and studied today, almost two hundred years after he is dead, I wonder why any well and healthy person can not at least accomplish some little part of what he did. Why do people remember Pope? It is for his good common sense and the wise things that he has said.

And Alexander Pope must have remembered his Lord's teachings that He had no respect of persons; for Pope wrote against sham and pretense, it mattered not who exhibited it. Though he was a great lover

of nature and liked to walk alone among the trees, he wrote almost entirely of man and his virtues or lack of them. I have often wondered if he would not have liked to preach had his body been a strong, upright one. But, through his writing, he could reach more hearers, people who would hear his messages even after he was dead. His object in writing is expressed in the following lines from his *Imitations of Horace*:

“And I not strip the gilding off a knave,
Unplaced, unpension’d, no man’s heir or slave?
I will, or perish in the generous cause:
Hear this, and tremble! You who scape the laws.
Yes, while I live, no rich or noble knave
Shall walk the world in credit to his grave.
To virtue only and her friends a friend,
The world beside may murmur or commend!”

The above lines show an independence, a fearlessness, an assurance of the mind of a man who is able to stand alone. They certainly do not express the flatteries of a sycophant, of a caterer to public opinion, neither are the ideas those of a “namby-pamby” pacifist, or a politician, who tries to keep the good will of all. I have said above that Pope was not always consistent, but I do not doubt for a moment that he meant to be a friend to “virtue only.” He certainly knew how to uncover and reveal to us the cold, hard, bare facts of life; and this was due to his common sense manner of viewing things and people. It matters not who may lack virtue, be it lord or slave, Pope dares to put his finger upon the exact sin and expose it. In this poem mentioned above, Pope tells us that his muse intended him to expose himself, his foes, and his friends; and he continues:

"With eyes that pry not, tongue that ne'er repeats;
Fond to spread friendships, but to cover heats;
To help who want, to forward who excel;
This, all who know me, know, who love me, tell.
And who unknown defame me, let them be.
Scribblers or peers, alike are mob to me."

From the above lines we can see that Pope considered any man who passed unjust criticism upon him as one of a mob; and this mob he does not fear to ignore. After all, this is the only common sense way to accomplish any undertaking. A man must be able to form his life's ideals, as Pope did; and irrespective of the rabble, he must press on to his goal, making censure, adverse criticism, spiteful flings, and jealous stabs stepping stones to higher things. Pope certainly did this, and he had judgment enough to cause this criticism, censure, and jealousy to rebound against its instigator. There is a tendency in man to resent censure, even though he realizes it as truth; but we must admit that it takes a man with good sound judgment to be able to reveal the truth: truth which may be so poignant that it hurts, but so plain that we must accept it as such.

I am afraid that many of us do not like Pope because his truth is too poignant, and this truth becomes Pope's satire. In his "Imitation of Horace" he proves his right to use satire; he says:

"Libels and satires! lawless things indeed!
But grave epistles, bringing vice to light."

Then Fortescue answers: "Indeed!"

"The case is alter'd—you may then proceed;
In such a case the plaintiff will be hiss'd,
My lords the judges laugh, and you're dismiss'd."

Pope uses sarcasm to prod men on to higher things, to noble deeds; he thinks it is the chief means of bringing vice to light, of making life more bright. So long as a man uses common sense in his sarcasm, a broad, well-balanced mind does not resent it; but if he gets down to little dirty spiteful personal thrusts, any man, foolish or intelligent, resents his sarcasm. In the *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge certainly lauds Pope's truth and method of reasoning! He writes: "But the English poet who first consciously recognized the value of truth as a canon of criticism and upheld it by a regular system of reasoning, was undoubtedly Pope."

No one, if guilty, need expect to escape Pope's censure. He says:

"Enough for half the greatest of these days,²
To escape my censure, not expect my praise."

And though the following lines may be rather egotistical, they express a sane inspirational view of Pope's life's work:

"Yes, I am proud. I must be proud to see
Men not afraid of God, afraid of me:
Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
Yet touch'd and shamed by ridicule alone.
O sacred weapon! left for truth's defense,
Sole dread of folly, vice, and insolence!
To all but heaven-directed hands denied,
The muse may give thee, but the gods must guide.
Reverent I touch thee! but with honest zeal;
To rouse the watchmen of the public weal,
To virtue's work provoke the tardy hall,
And goad the prelate slumbering in his stall."³

²Epilogue to the Satires.

³*Ibid.*

In his "Imitations of Horace" Pope decries the fact that poets have learned to please, not to wound; they lean to flattery's side; but some more nice

"Preserved the freedom and forbore the vice.
Hence satire rose, that just the medium hit
And heals with morals what it hurts with wit."

And Pope knew that the truth of his satire would make them live. He writes:

"Truth guards the poet, sanctifies the line,
And makes immortal verse as mean as mine."⁴

Pope realized that the beauty of his lines would not cause them to last, but he knew that the truth as expressed by them would last through the ages. I have heard people laugh at the jingling rhythm of Pope's heroic couplet, but I am not so much concerned with the rhythm of the lines; thought means more to me than assonance and rhythm. I am sure that no one can deny the sound wisdom in many of Pope's lines. I do not stop to pry into his life, his every action, his every word. It is enough for me to know that he has spoken many words of immortal truth, and truth is such, whether expressed by a libertine or a saint; morality is morality, whether found in the slums or in a palace. We do not need to unravel and understand all of Pope's history as Leslie Stephen seems to imagine we must. Such a thing is impossible. Stephen says that in his multifarious schemes Pope tried to cover himself with mystification and "hence it is as difficult clearly to disentangle the twisted threads of his complex history as to give an intelligent picture of the result of the investi-

⁴Imitations of Horace.

gation." Sometimes it is more profitable, in both time and labor, to break the twisted thread, which may be impossible to disentangle, and cast it aside. And after all, the part cast aside may be worthless. It is the sound judgment, the thought in his lines that make Pope's ideas live.

And Pope, as a means of passing his time because of ill health, gave us all these common sense ideas! Knowing he was practically helpless as to winning a livelihood, he turned to writing. He speaks of his life as being one long disease. What will power, what judgment he used then, in choosing a life's work! Many people of his deformities would have become mere dependents, demanding care on every hand. He says that bad rhyming may be a disease; but it, at least, "gives men happiness, or leaves them ease."⁵ This is what Pope hoped that writing would do for him: give him surcease from his pains, aches, and bodily ills. Dr. Johnson tells us that Pope was very sensitive to cold; "he wore a kind of fur doublet, under a shirt of very coarse warm linen, with fine sleeves; upon arising in the morning, he was laced in a stiff canvas bodice, scarcely able to hold himself erect while this was being done; he then put on a flannel waistcoat; his legs were so slender that he wore three pairs of stockings to enlarge their appearance." Johnson says that he could not dress or undress himself; that it was a hard matter for him to keep clean; and that when he wanted to sleep, he nodded even in company. A queer little fellow, of course, but what a gigantic task he undertook to perform! It was only his innate ability, the ability to reach conclusions in a common sense manner, that

⁵Imitations of Horace.

permitted him to realize many of his ideals in his literary career.

But Pope has certainly proven that his vocation was wisely chosen; for, as J. W. Mackail reminds us, Pope has many lines and phrases that form part of our common speech; people quote Pope not realizing that they are doing so, just as they do Shakespeare. Robert Carruthers says that "Dryden, better descended, and with good family alliances, failed to accomplish as much" as Pope did. Dr. Johnson speaks of the filial piety of Pope being in the highest degree amiable and exemplary; but best of all, "his parents had the happiness of living till Pope was at the summit of his poetical reputation, till he was at ease in his fortune, and without a rival in his fame; but they found no diminution of his respect and tenderness." There was little more of good to be said of him, but we must realize that it was not his verse form, the heroic couplet; it was not his social prestige, nor his ability to appear well that carried Pope to the heights; it was his method of reasoning by sound common sense. Warton tells us that although "the largest portion of Pope's works are didactic, moral, and satiric," it is manifest "that good sense and sound judgment were his characteristic excellencies."

Pope tells us why he took to imitating. He says: "My first taking to imitation was not out of vanity, but humility: I saw how defective my own things were, and I endeavored to mend my manner, by copying good strokes from others." There are few people who would spend five years on translating the *Iliad*, but Pope must have had foresight enough to see into the dim distance of the future to realize that fame was awaiting there. And this translating of the *Iliad* was no easy task! Pope said that when he first began the under-

taking he had wished a hundred times that someone would hang him; but after he had got into the task, translating 30 or 40 verses before getting up each day, he completed it with pleasure. And in making translations from the Latin, Courthope says that Pope, "by thus seeking English equivalents for Latin idioms, increased his ability to use harmony in his mother tongue, and later had no difficulty in clothing his thoughts in musical language." Pope learned to write by imitating those who had already proved their ability. William Trumbull writes to Pope, regarding the *Iliad*, that "true sense shines through the whole" of it. Again and again, and by different writers and critics, Pope is commended for his sense. Courthope says of his translation of the *Iliad* that it "occupies a position in literature which no other has ever approached. It is the only poem of the kind that has obtained a reputation beyond the limits of the country in the language of which it was written, and the only one that has fascinated the imagination of the unlearned." Leslie Stephen says that in 1715, when the first volume of the *Iliad* appeared, the translation entitled Pope to rank as the first poet of the day. "So rapid a rise to fame has had few parallels, and was certainly not approached until Byron woke and found himself famous at 24." It took a person of foresight, practical sense, and general sagacity to realize that the translation might make him famous.

"And this incessant practice of versification since childhood was the cause of Pope's precocious excellence," according to Courthope. Courthope continues that there is no ground for the regret of Warton for time wasted when Pope translated Ovid and Statius; for his translating was the preliminary discipline which made him a poet; he learned, by copying his prede-

cessors, to rival them." Dryden says that "Chaucer is a perpetual fountain of good sense." We can understand, then, why Pope translated Chaucer. Dryden continues, however, "Chaucer, I confess, is a rough diamond and must be polished ere he shines." Pope knew how to polish the rough diamond. He found that he could easily turn some of Chaucer's tales into ridicule and satire.

In his Preface to his Pastorals, Pope gives, in his own words, how he learned to write. The Preface is dated November 10, 1716. Pope states: "I writ, because it amused me. I corrected because it was as pleasant to me to correct as to write; and I published, because I was told I might please such as it was a credit to please." Later, in speaking of a poet, he says: "If he has not very good sense (and there are twenty men of wit for one man of sense), his living thus in a course of flattery may put him in no small danger of becoming a coxcomb; if praise be given to his face, it can scarce be distinguished from flattery; if in his absence, it is hard to be certain of it."

Now most critics seem to agree that Pope was easily flattered; the above speech would not prove this to be the case. Pope may have only pretended that he was being flattered; he shows an unusual mind in keeping his audience guessing. It is the shallow mind that is easily read, but Pope never wore his heart on his sleeve for daws to peck at; he had sense enough to keep the gossiping, inquisitive world guessing. A prying into one's affairs always causes a resentment in a common sense mind. And according to Pope, the world is a silly and unfair judge, unless ruled by justice.

For that matter, Pope may not have pretended at all, just kept quiet to see what the other fellow might do. We remember that he often spoke of shallow

minds, always babbling; and women were his especial mark, persons of sham and pretense. Even back years and years ago Pope saw the need of Justice, a great need today, as it has been through all time. Even a young miss that keeps her lover guessing, can have more than one lover. Pope's mind was not only a common-sensible one but also a shrewd one. He liked to keep humanity guessing. Why should he not when human kind had even denied him schooling because he was a Catholic?

III

IN HIS IDEALS AND RELIGIOUS VIEWS

Those of us who are Protestant may wonder how a man with Pope's judgment could have been a Roman Catholic and could have remained so under the opposition that there then was against non-conformists. Addison, in accord with the accepted faith, was advanced to a high position; Pope won station in spite of opposition, and he had stamina enough to remain true to his ideals though he might have won even greater fame by disregarding them. By his religion Pope, from 1726 to 1737, was completely barred from all advance in the path of politics, but he would not give up his mother's religion, feeling that no other religion would be any more comforting to him, or any more consoling, though politics had brought Addison and others into various degrees of fortune and position. And though non-conformists were not even admitted to higher institutions of learning in Pope's day, he never wavered in his faith; he told Dr. Clark, when the latter tried to argue with him, "What is the use of arguing? You would remain Protestant Clark and I Papist Pope!" This view shows judgment, for Pope realized that any sensible man is firm in his beliefs, and that arguing changes few opinions.

But we know that although Pope has always been called a Catholic, we have, in his own words, an assertion that he was not really a Roman Catholic. December 30, 1710, he wrote to Cromwell: "I, for my part, am no idol-worshipper, though a Papist." And

May 5, 1723, he wrote to Lord Harcourt: "If to be a Papist, be to profess and hold many such tenets of faith as are ascribed to Papists, I am not a Papist; and if to be a Papist, be to hold any that are averse to or destructive of the present government, King, or Constitution, I am no Papist." He wrote to Bishop Atterbury November 20, 1717: "I am not a Papist, for I renounce the temporal invasions of the Papal power, and detest their arrogated authority over Princes and states. I am a Catholic in the strictest sense of the word." And that sense was that Pope's mother was a Catholic, and principally because it would pain her for him to become anything else, he remained true to her religion, realizing that changing sects does not often change a person's moral life.

He was as true to his ideals of life as he was to his mother's religion. After the priest had, in 1744, administered the sacrament, he declared, "There is nothing that is meritorious but virtue and friendship; and indeed friendship itself is only a part of virtue." A trueness to any kind of a worthy ideal shows a depth of reasoning, a practical judgment. Virtue and friendship, according to Pope, are two outstanding ideals of his life. In his "Imitations of Horace" he tells us, "'Tis virtue makes a king," for

"He's armed without that's innocent within."

I do not believe that Pope is not entirely sincere in the following lines:

"I follow virtue; where she shines, I praise:
Point she to priest or elder, Whig or Tory!"⁶

⁶One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty-Eight.

Pope always insists that the essence of religion is conduct. He tells us:

“For forms of faith let graceless zealots fight;
He can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.”⁷

“In his poetry he deals only with the effects of religion, which he names Virtue, or the want of it, which he pronounces Vice.” “The exact form of his own religious belief is doubtful, but there is every reason to conclude that his religious *instinct* was deep and sincere. With the exception of his boyish paraphrase of Thomas A. Kempis, however, nothing is of a spiritual cast.” As I have said, Pope deals with the *effects* of religion. And we must admit that it is the *effects* of religion that really count; the name and the formality of religion do very little for the betterment and advancement of mankind; it is the results that mean something. On November 20, 1717, Pope wrote to Atterbury, when the latter tried to win him to the Anglican church, “I verily believe your lordship and I are both of the same religion, if we were thoroughly understood by one another; I believe that all honest and reasonable Christians would be so, if they did but talk together every day, and had nothing to do together, but to serve God, and live in peace with their neighbors.” Later in the letter, he said: “In a word, the things I have always wished to see are not a Roman Catholic or a French Catholic, or a Spanish Catholic, but a *true* Catholic; not a King of Whigs, nor a King of Tories, but a King of England.” In other words, Pope stood for justice, for true-worth, for actuality as opposed to pretense. He is a

⁷Essay on Man, Epistle III, 11. 305, 306.

"Slave to no sect, who takes no private road,
But looks through nature up to nature's God."⁸

"Slave to no sect". If all people could have been that great, life would not have been so cheap. How many quarrels and wars could have been prohibited! Think of the Protestant Reformation, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, the Catholic Inquisition, the persecutions of the Jews, and injustices that still continue because of sects! There are people that had rather belong to a sect than to know they are Christians. On the mission field Christianity has been retarded because of so many sects. The heathen wonders why each mission teacher has a different belief if all are working for the causes of God. Why can't all people look up to nature's God, keep their eye on God?

The Bible tells us that narrow is the road that leads to life eternal, but it does not mention any private roads; there is only one road, and few there will be that find it. If each one of us, like Pope, would do all we can to cause more to find that narrow way—the way that leads onward and upward to a richer, better life! He must be noble who can give us such lines as these:

"Who noble ends by noble means obtains,
Or failing, smiles, in exile or in chains,
Like good Aurelius let him reign or bleed;
Like Socrates, that man is great indeed!"⁹

We find Pope writing to his Catholic friend Caryll, May 1, 1714: "Though I find it an unfortunate thing

⁸Essay on Man.

⁹*Ibid.*

to be bred a Papist, when one is obnoxious to four parts in five as being so too much, and to the fifth part as being so too little, I shall yet be easy under both their mistakes, and be what I more than seem to be, for I suffer for it. God is my witness that I do no more envy the Protestants their places and possessions than I do our priests their charity or learning. I am ambitious of nothing but the good opinion of all good men of all sides, for I know that one virtue of a free spirit is of more worth than all the virtues put together of all the narrow-souled people in the world." A shallow mind could never record such thoughts as are contained in this letter. Again in "Imitations of Horace" he says:

"Sworn to no master, of no sect am I:
As drives the storm, at any door I knock,
And house with Montagne now, or now with Locke."

There is much in the above lines; for when the "storm drives", few of us are particular upon whose door we knock! Man, in necessity, is not so choice as man in affluence. It is much easier to be submissive while the storm drives, and Pope realized that he must submit to kingly aggression. How many found out that they must submit during World War II, when there were so many opposing forces and no one to whom the sufferers could look. Again Pope influences me in that I see how he tried to get along with all sects. He knew that the Catholics were legislated against, and he had common sense enough to try to be fair with all. After all, justice is the thing for which we should all strive.

Today, I have wondered more than once if sects do not cause lack of Christianity rather than an abundance

of it. The heathen on the mission fields questions, "Why so many different beliefs?" What does it matter of what faith we are so long as we are doing the will of God? Japan has told the missionaries from America and other places, "Co-operate or get out." And so sects are not so distinct in Japan among Christians.

There is no reason in our submitting ourselves to a sect; but as Pope tells us, we should submit ourselves to virtue and its attendant truths. Pope wrote to Henry Brooke December 1, 1730: "I sincerely worship God, believe in his revelations, resign to his dispensations, love all his creatures, am in charity with all denominations of Christians, however violently they treat each other, and detest none so much as that profligate race who would loosen the bands of morality, either under the pretense of religion or freethinking." "However violently they treat each other". And that is still happening. Will people ever learn to live in harmony? Will they ever be "big" enough to glory in others' good fortune? How many times just because another sect is doing well its should-be well-wishers are criticising and hindering its progress! There are people and people who have not a talent and yet they criticise those that do.

Alexander Pope tried not to hate people, but he hated their lack of charity and their sins. Over and over he tells of the wickedness of vices, and he always upholds virtue. How I wish that I might always show the common sense that Pope usually exhibited! How great minds influence others! I know that few have influenced my thoughts and actions so much as Alexander Pope and Booker T. Washington, for I realize what they struggled against; and their struggles against odds have made me all the more determined to do something worthwhile with my life.

And from a small child, my mother never forgot to warn me against vices of any kind. Though she never attained fame in any way, her teachings always directed my path **ONWARD AND UPWARD**, my motto.

Pope says in "The Universal Prayer":

"Teach me to know another' woe,
To hide the fault I see;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to show."

If all of us could and would keep that prayer in mind! As Pope says: "I hate no man as a man, but I hate vice in any man; I hate no sect, but I hate uncharitableness in any sect." What common sense ideas are herein expressed, and what a world we would have if all people would practice the teaching and the truth in these lines!

"Here wisdom calls: 'Seek virtue first, be bold!'
As gold to silver, virtue is to gold."¹⁰

For "_____ '_____',
_____,"

" 'Tis the first virtue, vices to abhor;
And the first wisdom, to be fool no more."¹¹

In Pope's "Essay on Man" he tells us that "worth makes the man." Sometimes in these days of scramble, jealousy, and favoritism, we almost doubt the statement, but remembering that there is a supernatural power, we can recall Pope's words:

¹⁰Imitations of Horace.

¹¹*Ibid.*

"Honor and shame from no conditions rise,
Act well your part; there all the honor lies."

And we are ready to say with Pope, and to press on:

"Count me those only who were good and great."

And Pope means actual greatness when he speaks of being good and great; for in this same poem he speaks of looking "shallow greatness through." So there is a real and a pretended greatness; and Pope, through his practical, innate judgment, was able to "look shallow greatness through." It is not easy to find an honest man; for, in his "Epilogue to the Satires", Pope says:

"To find an honest man I beat about,
And love him, court him, praise him, in and out."

Honor meant much to Pope as it does to any practical mind. Honor meant more than riches, for Pope never had any love for money; neither was he extravagant. In his "Imitations of Horace" he asks why the scramble for wealth and place, "for inexorable Death shall level all." In the same poem he resents the idea that "a man of wealth is dubbed a man of worth." Again, in this poem he says:

"Adieu to Virtue, if you're once a slave:
Send her to court, you send her to her grave."

And from what we can learn from history, Pope's low estimate of court life was more than probably correct. How he resented the fact that the world caters to wealth! He realized how his low station, his lack of riches, had hindered his progress; he expresses

more than once in his writings the idea that had he been a lord, success would have awaited him on every hand. He says:

“Wise, if a minister; but, if a king,
More wise, more learn’d, more just, more every-
thing.”¹²

But Pope scorns the poor who try to ape the rich as much as he does the rich, and there is certainly sense in his remarks. He speaks of the kings who take all the money they can get while the poor “in dirt and darkness stink content.”¹³ But Pope satirizes everything. None but a man of judgment could be a satirist. It takes a mind with cool sound judgment to be able to sit off and look on, but all the while be able to see through every pretense, to understand every act, to laugh at make-belief, and to feel disgust with every inconsistency. A satirist always has the fighting spirit, ready to oppose everyone but himself.

In 1726, while Pope was at the height of his fame, Amherst defined *common sense* as the ordinary ability to keep ourselves from being imposed upon by gross contradictions, palable inconsistencies, and masked impostures. I am sure Pope knew how to keep himself from being imposed upon; he may have known too well. But in spite of his satire, Pope prayed:

“Teach me to feel another’s woe,
To hide the fault I see:
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.

¹²Moral Essays.

¹³Imitations of Horace.

If I am wrong, O teach my heart
To find the better way."¹⁴

And the "better way" to him meant love of the whole human race, and in that race to satirize vice in any form. He says in his "Essay on Man":

"God loves from whole to parts: but human soul
Must rise from individual to the whole.
Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
The centre moved, a circle straight succeeds,
Another still, and still another spreads;
Friend, parent, neighbor, first it will embrace;
His country next, and next all human race."

So Pope believes that self-love comes first to awaken the mind; he also believes that self and social love are the same. He declares:

"That virtue only makes our bliss below;
And all our knowledge, is ourselves to know."¹⁵

Again and again Pope comes back to virtue, for virtue and friendship are two of his ideals. We know the many long and warm friendships he formed, and we *must* not doubt his love of virtue! We have the lines:

"One self-approving hour whole years outweighs
Of stupid starers, and of loud huzzas."¹⁶

¹⁴The Universal Prayer.

¹⁵Essay on Man.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

How true! Though I may never win the renown in life that Pope did, if I can truthfully say, "I have done my best", not giving way to petty jealousies and trivial things of life, if I know that I have kept self in control, or have, through will power and determination, not given way to some bad habit. I feel more elated than when I occasionally receive the public's acclaim. For, though someone may write, telling me that he admires some act of mine, I say to myself, "Yes, but you don't know my hateful little habits that God alone sees and knows."

And Pope fully realized that loud huzzas often come from stupid starers, who sometimes yell just because the crowd is yelling. Silly, childish humanity! How well people prove their stupidity at a wrestling match! They shout and scream and cheer even though one fellow is pounding another to a jelly, and they usually cheer the one who is winning, whoever he may be. None knew better than Pope the stupidity of human beings. Why pretend to have faith in humanity if we do not? We can usually have faith in the few who may point out the way; but humanity, as a whole, has failed over and over.

Though Pope was accused of toadying to certain people, in the recesses of his heart, he had a contempt for their stupidity. Who knows what a great mind may be thinking, though silent? As Pope has said, it is the shallow mind that tells all it knows, or makes itself ridiculous in the attempt. So few people like to be alone, as Pope did, to walk through the woods, to meditate upon a world whose people do so many inane things! So many people can not bear their own company for long, and such natures can not be still long enough to read what others have written.

People who really do things in life are always criticized; they usually have plenty of enemies because of jealousy and envy. And though many critics would have us believe that Pope was all bad, he, too, must have known the full meaning of "self-approving hours", in spite of the fact that, if we were to collect all the scandal against him that each of his biographers has given, we would have a gross, indecent, sensual, coarse, heinous, irritable, spiteful, lying character; the list of derogatory adjectives is almost illimitable. But Pope cries out to us, "Peace, O Virtue! peace is all thy own." And when he came to die, he must have found peace, for he died so peacefully that the attendants did not know the exact time of his expiration.

Peace had meant much to Pope even in childhood; he had always loved solitude; he had hated to give up the quiet of Windsor Forest. October 26, 1705, he had written to Wycherly: "I can not but prefer solitude to the company of all these", speaking of honest gentlemen. "Solitude, conducing most to make us look into ourselves, should be the most instructive state of life. In a word, if a man be a coxcomb, solitude is his best school; and if he be a fool, it is his best sanctuary."

Though Pope preferred solitude to the company of some people, he knew that "little" minds detest solitude. The shallow mind must be entertained; it can not bear solitude. It likes to be where lights are brightest, where fun is most boisterous, and where it has no time for serious thought. How many people want to "look into" themselves? They already know what sorry pictures they might see, but Pope knew that solitude might help any person that wanted help. Even a fool can find a safe place if away from people and crowds.

And Charity was another of Pope's ideals in life He writes:¹⁷


"Self-love thus push'd to social, to divine,
Gives thee to make thy neighbor's blessing thine."

And later in the poem he calls the "height of bliss but height of charity." He tells us that there is no boasting of ancestors, for "all the blood of all the Howards" can not ennoble "sots, or slaves, or cowards." There is, however, one attribute worthy attention and that is charity. In his "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady" Pope says:

"So perish all whose hearts ne'er learned to glow
For other's good or melt at other's woe."

Though Alexander Pope had no ancestry to boast of, he knew that blood would not make just any kind of a person any better. But a warm, loving heart was the thing needed to make this a better world. He did not stop with a tenth—the tithe; he gave when and where he saw a need. How many people that never think of helping anyone, except with an ulterior motive, wondering what they will get in return! There are people who will let things go to waste rather than give it to those in need. Such action is simple hoarding, as much as that of hoarding gold. "It is more blessed to give than receive."

Of his 800 pounds a year, Pope gave 100 to charity. He never forgot to be charitable, at least in money matters. We have instance after instance of his charitable acts. And many of these deeds of kindness were on behalf of men engaged in a struggle for success in




¹⁷Essay on Man.

literary pursuits. Savage, although a willing acceptor of charity, loved to rail at his benefactors if they crossed his wishes. After the Queen's death he was without any means of subsistence; Pope and others, on certain conditions, allowed him 50 pounds a year, 20 of which came from Pope. Savage resented the conditions and his friends discontinued their subscriptions, but Pope remained constant in his friendship and charity until 1743; then, thinking that he had evidence of Savage's ingratitude, he wrote him a letter informing him that he must depend upon his own resources. Pope also tried to help bring Samuel Johnson into public notice. Courthope says, "He (Pope) was charitable to his power, active to do good offices, and piously attentive to an old bed-ridden mother who died but a little time before him." And these many acts of kindness were another proof of Pope's calm judgment and of a deep religious conviction. It is the practical, sagacious mind that realizes the need of charity. The tribute that Pope paid to his father, which I have quoted above, and the wish that he might die as peacefully as his father, are only the expressions of charity, which is love. The wish to die peacefully was ominous, for Pope's death was much like his father's.

Before his death his mind began to wander. He said on one occasion to Spence, who had known him for 20 years, "What's that?" pointing into the air, with a steady regard; and then he looked down on him, and said, with a pleasant smile, "'Twas a vision!" At another time he arose from his bed at four o'clock, and was discovered in his library, writing an essay on the "Immortality of the Soul." Very shortly before his death he observed: "I am so certain of the soul's being immortal, that I feel it within me as it were by intuition." His death certainly does not show any fear

of a misspent life. Even Leslie Stephen, who is rather bitter and harsh in his criticism of Pope, calms down at the death of Pope and allows him to die peacefully. And I do not believe that Pope grew virtuous merely in his old age. In his "Thoughts on Various Subjects" he says: "When men grow virtuous in their old age, they only make a sacrifice to God of the Devil's leavings." I can not believe that Pope's life amounted only to the "devil's leavings."



IV

IN HIS CHOICE OF FRIENDS

Someone might question whether Pope chose his friends or they were just "happen-so's." Pope could just as easily have associated with the slum dwellers of London, no doubt more easily, than he did with Lords and Ladies, poets, critics, and men of fame. There are no records to show that Pope ever associated for long with people who could not influence or help him in some way. If he found a friend unworthy of trust, he showed no hesitancy in breaking a friendship. Leslie Stephen accuses him of making and breaking friendships for his own self-aggrandizement. But Courthope does not agree with Stephen; the former says: "The poet was not given to 'damn with faint praise', or to desert his friends when they were unpopular. He could praise Cibber when he thought he deserved it; he exerted himself in the behalf of Johnson; he wrote some of his finest lines in praise of Lord Oxford when he had fallen from power. " So Leslie Stephen, like most critics of Pope, is not always consistent.

But this forethought in choosing and dropping friends would certainly show Pope's sagacity. He says, in speaking of court life, "I get a whisper and withdraw." Perhaps the "whisper" is all that he needed and all that he wanted. Few people care for friends who are nothing more than dead weights. A man would certainly show no common sense who would go through life burdened with a heavy chain around his neck just because he had, at one time, placed it there.

Nor were Pope's friends any more accidental than are our friends to-day, not even so much so; for Pope made it his business to know and mingle with influential people, with whom he could enjoy a live, sensible conversation. He himself said, "I'd never doubt at court to make a friend." And from his youth up Pope was in a position to choose his friends. He writes: "Envy must own I live among the great." Pope could have gone off to chase hares with other boys, but his practical understanding caused him, even at an early age, to have friends much older than himself.

Sir William Trumbull met Pope when the latter was sixteen. Sir William was then sixty; he had been ambassador to Constantinople under James II, and Secretary of State under William III. He retired and settled near Binfield, where the Popes lived. He was delighted with the "precocious son. The old diplomatist and the young poet soon became fast friends, took constant rides together and talked over modern and classic poetry." Of course Pope's common sense, his precocity, his talent impressed Sir William. A boy of sixteen does not commonly impress a man of sixty and with the experience Sir William had had, unless he shows unusual powers of judgment. But "Pope was always ambitious of splendid acquaintances; and from his first entrance into the world, he became familiar with those whose rank, station, and age made them conspicuous." No ordinary mind could have made the friends that Pope made.

He was a friend and correpondent of Lord and Lady Orrery from 1735 to his death, a period of nine years; he was in communication with Lord Oxford from 1721 to 1739, a period of 18 years; and from 1718 to 1741, a period of 23 years, he corresponded with Lord Bathurst. If these friendships were accidental, they

were certainly long accidents; and I am sure no one would think of a 23 years correspondence as accidental.

Pope, at the age of 17, writes to Wycherley, who was then 64 years old, April 30, 1705: "I know it is general opinion that friendship is best contracted betwixt persons of equal age." But he says that a man full of self-love should have, as a friend, an old man; for the friendship is more likely to be true. Such a friendship is of greater use and advantage to both; the old man will become more gay and agreeable; the young man more discreet and prudent. So we see that Pope had a purpose in choosing friends older than himself. Pope had met him in 1704 and in speaking of his friendship with Wycherley, he told Spence that when he had first met him, he had followed him about "like a dog." But the two became so familiar that Wycherley sent Pope some of his poems to correct. Pope defaced the poems so much that Wycherley objected; and Pope's letter, of May 2, 1710, perhaps caused Wycherley to quit writing.

Pope had written: "It is my desire that you take your papers out of my hands into your own, and that no alterations may be made but when both of us are present, when you may be satisfied with every blot, as well as every alteration, and nothing be put upon the papers but what you shall give your own sanction and assent to, at the same time." This is another incident which shows his deep insight into human nature. He well knew the encroachments upon friendships; no doubt he was becoming exasperated with Wycherley's demands, and his sarcasm in this letter becomes mere humor to me, showing, however, that Pope does not mean to be imposed upon. He says in his "Epilogue to the Satires" (1738) that it is well to

"Laugh at your friends, and if your friends are sore,
So much the better, you may laugh the more."

He used his reason and judgment to protect himself from Wycherley's demands. Dr. Johnson says of Wycherley: "He esteemed without virtue and caressed without good humor. Wycherley, the old Scribbler, got angry when Pope defaced some of his poems that he had asked him to revise. They parted, but Pope esteemed him to his death." But Courthope, speaking of Wycherley and Pope, says, "As to the cause of the breach between them, all is uncertainty."

Whatever caused the rift in their friendship, we can scarcely lay the blame to Pope. They had corresponded from 1704 to 1710. Pope wrote to Cromwell, October 12, 1710, after the letter of May 2: "I have for some years been employed much like children that build houses with cards, endeavoring very busily and eagerly to raise a friendship, which the first breath of any ill-natured bystander could puff away." But October 28, of the same year, he again writes to Cromwell: "I do not in the least know to this hour what it is that estranged him from me. I shall never be his enemy whatsoever he says of me." And Pope witnessed Wycherley's death-bed marriage, attesting a friendship that did not waver, in spite of Stephen's statement to the contrary.

And concerning Pope's friendship with Cromwell, Stephen speaks thus: "Pope was proud enough for the moment at being taken by the hand of this elderly buck (Cromwell was thirty years older than Pope), though as Pope himself rose in the literary scale and could estimate literary reputations more accurately, he became, it would seem, a little ashamed of his early enthusiasms." And so the friendship dropped. Al-

though Stephen makes the above assertion in a rather derogatory manner, there are two evidences of good sound common sense in the statement. Pope showed common sense in choosing a friend 30 years his senior, but he showed even more judgment in knowing when to end an unfavorable friendship. Stephen admits Cromwell's inferiority, and yet he seems to have the impression that friendships should never be terminated.

Pope's own words give a more sane and reasonable view concerning friendships. He says: "When merit is wanting, it avails nothing to have been encouraged by the great, commended by the eminent, and favored by the public in general." There is no doubt but that Cromwell was encouraged by the great and commended by the eminent; he was also especially popular with the ladies. And although Pope may have loved him, he had judgment enough to realize that Cromwell had little real merit. In a letter to Gay, written November 13, 1712, he mentions not having heard from Cromwell for a year, and he adds: "I really much love Mr. Cromwell."

Courthope seems to agree with Stephen concerning this friendship with Cromwell. He writes: "In later years, when the reputation of Cromwell as a wit had become obsolete, while Pope himself was at the height of his fame, the poet was no doubt annoyed at the publication of correspondence, which he conceived might injure his dignity in the opinion of the public." But does not this contradict a statement made by Courthope, which I have quoted above? Here he says: "The poet was not given to 'damn with faint praise,' or to desert his friends when they were unpopular." Courthope must necessarily fall into Pope's category of inconsistent people. As Pope says, which I have quoted before:

"Show me one who has it in his power
To act consistent with himself an hour."¹⁸

These lines show that Pope realizes himself as inconsistent, since he believes that people, as a rule, are all inconsistent. Most of us can easily see the other fellow's faults, but we hate to recognize our own.

When I think of my own mother, wishing that I might be the Christian that I believe her to have been, I can not forget that she was inconsistent when it came to her children, whom she was always ready to forgive, it mattered little what they did; but she could be very severe in her judgment of others.

Pope may not have always been consistent in his friendships; but when he found that someone had not lived up to his expectations, he severed that friendship at once, though he expected perfection from none. Though I am not always consistent, and surely not in my study and honor of Pope's common sense, daily I can see his thought has influenced me, making me see the sham and pretense of humanity and wanting to use common sense in my dealings, just as he tried to do two hundred years ago. Even Courthope, who is considered a well qualified, if not quite a perfect, authority on Pope, seems to have failed to understand his anomalous subject. He realizes, however, what these friendships meant to Pope. He writes: "It was fortunate for Pope and speaks well for his character, that he had many ardent and influential friends like Swift." "He (Swift) met Pope and their correspondence commenced at the close of 1713, and was continued without interruption for 26 years. Pope was then 25; Swift 46." Here we have another instance of Pope's friendship with a man older than himself, an-

¹⁸Horace Imitated.

other evidence of practical judgment; and the length of their correspondence goes to prove an unusual friendship between two capable souls.

J. W. Mackail, another of Pope's critics, accords his subject common sense, yet he tells us: "He had not strength enough to stand alone, or to advance fearlessly in the realm that lay open to him. He fell under the domination of Bolingbroke." But there are many statements that Mackail makes which are to be questioned. Pope knew that Swift's friendship was a desirable one, and it took good cool judgment to keep that friendship alive through 26 years. It sometimes seems impossible that Pope could make and hold so many friends and still find time to do all the other work that he did!

But, after all, it is the busiest people who are not afraid to tackle any job. Those people who find excuses not to do this or that, are usually those people of least accomplishments. And we must never forget the condition of Pope's health! Many with as weakened a condition as his, would have remained in bed as invalids. But Alexander Pope was not a man of excuses. He could not have been and left so much to show for his activities.

His life should prove to anyone that accomplishments depend almost entirely upon determination and will power—persistence to go forward in spite of handicaps. How many of us would like to be known as well as Alexander Pope! But how many would pay the price that he paid? How many would press forward, would sit for hours scribbling, or translating other men's writings and thoughts into a language of our own? How many are able, as he has been, to encourage and inspire people through the years?

To me, his life was much like that of the Negro, who

has had to work against so many hardships and handicaps. When I think of Alexander Pope, I usually recall Booker T. Washington and all those other Negroes that many still want to hold in derision. Alexander Pope, like the Negro, was discriminated against in his day. Two hundred years later people should know better than to use discrimination against humanity, white or black; for our God is no respecter of persons.

But although Addison was also a contemporary of Pope, these two were never, for long, very intimate friends; but from all I have been able to deduce from their relationships, I do not feel that it was lack of judgment on Pope's part that caused the many rifts in their checkered friendship. Dr. Johnson speaks several times of Addison's jealousy toward Pope. Addison, however, about 1713, advised Pope not "to be content with the praise of half of the nation when he might be universally favored." Spence, too, tells us: "Addison was jealous of Pope. The latter's own story says that Lord Warwick told him that it was in vain for him to endeavor to be well with Mr. Addison; that his jealous temper would never admit of a settled friendship between them; and to convince him of what he said, assured him that Addison had encouraged Gildon to publish scandals about him and had given him ten guineas after they were published. Pope says that he then wrote Addison a letter and Addison after that treated him civilly." Courthope, though, does not believe the above account, but he says that Pope was perhaps right in believing that Addison was jealous of his reputation.

Pope's treatment of Addison concerning his Pastorals certainly showed an unusual ability in knowing how to be kept from being imposed upon. Addison, evidently with the intent to humiliate Pope and to weaken

his growing popularity, in the *Spectator*, October 30, 1712, praised the Pastorals, written by Philips, and ignored those by Pope. He spoke of Philips's Pastorals as having given new life and a more natural beauty to the art of writing. Both Philips' and Pope's Pastorals had come out in Tonson's *Miscellany* in 1709, Philip's at the beginning and Pope's at the conclusion; Pope then even commended the Pastorals of Philips; but after Addison's remarks in the *Spectator* and the essays anonymously printed in the *Guardian*, the successor of the *Spectator*, no doubt written by Tickell, in both of which writings Pope seemed to have been ignored, Pope sent an anonymous essay to the *Guardian*, April 27, 1713, praising Philip's Pastorals so highly and in such an effusive manner, that the judicious reader could easily see the absurdity of Philip's eulogy and the superior merit of Pope's work; he brought out the many weaknesses of trite proverbs, provincialisms, and effusions. Steele, deceived by the irony of the essay, showed it to Pope, protesting that "he would never publish any paper where one member of the club was complimented at the expense of another." Philips was disgusted when he saw the paper in print; he hung up a birch-rod at Button's Coffee-House, where the wits were accustomed to assemble, and swore that if Pope appeared there, he would use it on him. No wonder that Pope and those who understood the jest stood off and laughed; in spite of the fact that the innocent were made to suffer, the whole proceeding is enough to make anyone laugh!

Pope, feeling certain that he did not care to receive the punishment planned for him and which he knew that he deserved, had reason enough to discontinue his attendance of the Club at Button's; he resumed the company of his old associates at Will's Coffee-House.

Again his common sense came to his rescue, enabling him to outwit Addison and thus save himself from a gross imposition. Philips was 30 and Pope 21 when their Pastorals were first published, but Philips ranks among the minor poets and is scarcely known, while "Pope quickly ripened into genius, and reigned without a competitor."

One friend that I have mentioned and one whom many, perhaps, would not consider a worthy friend for a common sense man, was Lord Bolingbroke. If we study the life of this man closely, I am sure that few, if any, would consider him as a worthy addition to a list of friends, although he had much influence until the death of Queen Anne and George I came to the throne. Pope, however, shows that he, at least, appreciated the man who remained his friend for more than thirty years and turned traitor only when he no longer had Pope's actual presence and personality to keep him to the path of duty. Lord Bolingbroke was always more or less of a rake. He was ten years Pope's senior. Dr. Johnson does not think very highly of any of Pope's friends it seems, unless it be of Lord Bathurst, and Courthope does not paint Bathurst in any very glowing colors. But I am not trying to prove the merit or demerit of the friends themselves; I am attempting to show that Pope exhibits common sense in having friends older than himself and in his ability to retain friends through the years.

Dr. Johnson says that next to contemplating his possessions, Pope enjoyed that of enumerating the men of high rank with whom he was acquainted; but he never set genius to sale and he never flattered those whom he did not love, nor did he praise those whom he did not esteem. Johnson tells us further that except Lord Bathurst none of his noble friends was such that a

good man would want to have his intimacy known to posterity. Pope, notwithstanding Dr. Johnson's conclusions, says of Bolingbroke: "He is something superior to anything I have seen in human nature. You know I don't deal much in hypocrites: I quite think him what I say." But another of Pope's friends, Lady Mary Montagu, once said of Bolingbroke, "I would never be acquainted with Lord Bolingbroke, because I always looked upon him as a vile man." Pope himself at one time said, "Lord Bolingbroke is not deep either in pictures, statues, or architecture;" but we have him, later in life, in a letter to Allen of April 17, 1739, speaking of Bolingbroke, who has just set sail for France, in these terms: "God knows if I ever may see again the greatest man I ever knew, and one of the best friends! But this I know, that no man is so much worth taking any journey to see, to any man who truly knows what he is. I have done so these thirty years, and I can not be deceived in this point, whatever I may be in any other man's character." Poor Pope! in spite of his common sense and unusual ability to understand human nature, we know that he *was* deceived in Bolingbroke's friendship. Even in 1744, in a letter to Mr. Allen, Pope speaks of bringing his friends, Mr. Warburton, and Lord Bolingbroke together; he continues: "Nothing in all my life has been so great a pleasure to my nature, as to bring deserving and knowing men together." In the same year, in another letter to Allen, he writes: "I may go with Mr. Warburton, whom I have promised to make known to the only great man in Europe who knows as much as he." And although Lord Bolingbroke seemed to have been jealous of the new friend, Pope's allegiance to the former was not weakened. Mr. Warburton never showed any special

interest in the new friendship, but the quarrel between the two broke out over Pope's grave.

Courthope says that the friendship between Lord Bolinbroke and the poet really started upon Bolingbroke's return from France in 1723. Bolingbroke renewed his acquaintance with Pope, now beyond question the most celebrated man of letters of his day. He had exhorted Pope to quit translations and write what would "deserve to be translated 3000 years hence into language as yet perhaps unformed." Lord Bolingbroke was soon, after his return, surrounded by an illustrious and admiring circle, to whom he delivered himself as one who is an oracle. Lord Chesterfield said of him: "He possessed such a flowing happiness of expression that even his most familiar conversation, if taken down in writing, would have born the press without the least correction, either as to method or style." It was quite natural that Pope, with his sharp, active, keen mind, would be attracted toward just such a character as is pictured above. And the fact that Bolingbroke founded the Brothers' Club with the express purpose of aiding literature, might have helped to increase Pope's interest in his life-long friend. And Bolingbroke could not have been the nonentity that his enemies would have us believe, else he could not have been so influential.

About 1726 he settled at Dawley, within an easy drive of Pope's villa at Twickenham; he at once became the object of Pope's reverence and the inspirer of some of his verse. Pope used many of his philosophical fragments in his "Essay on Man." There is no doubt but that Lord Bolingbroke possessed brilliant and oratorical powers, but he was not always logical; but his brilliancy of mind dazzled Pope. He managed to entangle Pope in the Opposition.¹⁹

¹⁹Discussed further in Chapter entitled "Politics."

This friendship between Bolingbroke and Pope continued until Pope's death in 1744. Many of his friends were in attendance upon him before and during Pope's last illness. At one time Lord Bolingbroke was sitting in conversation with Pope and Lord Marchmont; Pope saw Martha Blount at the bottom of the terrace; he asked Bolingbroke to show her up; Bolingbroke crossed his legs and sat still. Yet, he sometimes wept over Pope in his helpless decay. Upon being once told by Spence that Pope's humanity seemed to have survived his understanding, Bolingbroke replied, "It has so. I never in my life knew a man that had so tender a heart for his particular friends, or more general friendship for mankind." Another time he said, "I have known Pope these thirty years, and value myself more in his friendship than—" His grief then suppressed his voice. There is no doubt but that Bolingbroke was greatly affected when Pope spoke of the suffering he experienced from not being able to think; he even wept over Pope, exclaiming several times, interrupted by sobs, "O Great God, what is man?"

Pope left his manuscripts to Bolingbroke and his copyrights to Warburton. It was through Bolingbroke that Pope's *Iliad*, in original form, has been left to posterity; Bolingbroke obtained it as a curiosity; it descended to Mallet, and it is now in the British Museum. But the man who had been a friend to Pope "for over thirty years" and who had only lately wept over him, tried to blast his name when he found that Pope had secretly retained an impression of 1500 copies of "The Patriot King," though Bolingbroke had requested that only a few copies be made.

Lord Bolingbroke was infuriated; he published lines that have been the foundation of the scandal that biographers of Pope have seemed eager to repeat; but as

James F. Rhodes says: "When it affects great men, the 'taint of vice whose strong corruptions inhabit our frail blood' becomes an especially toothsome morsel of gossip for those who gladly believe that intellectual greatness is prone to the indulgence of the passions." Pope's words seemed to forcast the future when he said, "I have lived long enough, when I have lived to despise and lament the worthlessness, the perfidiousness, and meanness of half my acquaintances; and to see the dirtiness and dishonesty of those we thought best of." Little did he have a suspicion that Bolingbroke was one of those worthless and perfidious beings! Later he says, "It is a comfort that my old and long experienced friend Lord Bolingbroke is here, in case this should be my last winter."

Notwithstanding Bolingbroke's jealousy and hatred of Warburton, the latter proved nothing but a true friend to Pope, both during Pope's life and after his death. Warton, in 1756, had published the first volume of his essay concerning Pope; but fearing Warburton, who had attacked roughly many of his passages, he did not bring out his second volume until 1782. Warton, in spite of his belittling of Pope's poetic ability, says that it is manifest that good sense and judgment were his characteristic excellencies.

And although Bishop Warburton had not made any effort to meet Pope until April of 1740, and although he was ten years Pope's junior, he must have been thoroughly convinced of Pope's worth and good judgment after this date. He writes: "Mr. Pope never flattered anybody for money; he wanted fame, not money;" and we know that it was an honorable fame that Pope wanted. Warburton speaks of "his filial piety, his disinterested friendships, his love and admiration of virtue, and hatred and contempt of vice,

his extreme charity to the indigent, his warm benevolence to mankind, his supreme veneration of the Deity, and above all, his sincere belief of Revelation." And in spite of the amount of adverse criticism against Pope and the fact that Bolingbroke did impose upon his friendship, we must admit that the above given attributes are certainly those of a man capable of sound judgment, sufficient to vindicate his moral character.

And there is little wonder that Warburton had such love and respect for Pope. Pope gave him many proofs of his gratitude and friendship: he took him with him on some of his rambles; he introduced him to many of his influential friends; and in 1741, after Oxford University had proposed to confer the degree of Doctor of Common Law upon Pope and the Doctor of Divinity upon Warburton but delayed in granting that of Warburton, Pope wrote to his friend, August 12, 1741: "I will die before I receive one, in an art I am ignorant of, at a place, where there remains any scruples of bestowing one on you, in a science of which you are so great a master. In short, I will be doctored with you, or not at all." These statements show sound reasoning in more than one sense: first, Pope realized the absurdity of a University's conferring a degree upon him, since he had been barred from attending one, and using dilatory means in granting one to a man who was worthy of a degree; and secondly, the offer of a degree an honorary one, was ludicrous, when we remember that Pope, on account of religion, had been denied the opportunity of attending college. We are reminded of a line from the *Dunciad*,

"As without learning they can take degrees,"

which contains more sense than poetry. Pope, also in

this instance, showed that he did not desert his friends easily and grasp at every honor held out to him.

If Pope were alive today, more than 200 years later, he would still be able to write. "As without learning they can take degrees"; for a degree today does not necessarily mean that a person is learned; it may mean that a person had money enough to sit through enough years and courses to obtain a degree.

And how ridiculous honorary degrees are! There are honorary degrees conferred upon people who have little knowledge of facts; their knowledge may be practical or gained from experience, but they may know little of prescribed subjects that most students must take.

Life to Pope must have been one big joke, and he was usually laughing, though saddened, at its innuendoes. He could have agreed with our modern expression, "Monkeys are the quaintest peoples." But I scarcely think that Pope's was a good-natured laughter at people's faults. His laughter was often sarcastic and bitter. No doubt but few of his associates knew exactly how he considered them, whether as wise men or as fools. He never seemed afraid to express his opinions, whether about a lord or a peasant. But few people wanted the "Wasp of Twickenham" to turn his pen against them.

It seems queer that such a small, mis-shapen man could cause all the notice that Alexander Pope did! Though the schools were closed to him, it seemed that few doors of homes did not swing wide for him. He associated with men of all degrees and classes, proving the power of the mind to dominate over physical weakness and legislation against civil rights.

Even the great Voltaire and the Prince of Wales could never become firm friends of Pope's, and the Prince did not tempt his affections so much as some of

Pope's biographers would have us believe. Although he had little to say when the Prince once asked him how he could love a Prince while he disliked Kings, we can not be sure whether Pope really loved the Prince so much as the latter might have imagined. Pope, as most sensible people, did not make known all the secrets of his heart. I can imagine Pope as laughing inwardly at the Prince's conceit. It is true that the Prince gave Pope some marble heads of poets and urns for his garden, and that Pope gave him one of Bounce's puppies and wrote a distich for his "Highness's Dog;" yet, we must also remember that Pope once went to sleep at his own table while Frederick, the Prince of Wales, was talking of poetry. And so we must put two and two together, and although Dr. Johnson calls Pope a "Fool to Fame" and says that his admiration for men of high rank increased with his years, we must remember that people with deep minds are not so easily read and understood as are those with shallow minds, which are incapable of thought without audible expression; as Pope, in "Thoughts on Various Subjects" says: "It is with narrow-soul'd people as with narrow-neck'd bottles; the less they have in them, the more noise they make in pouring it out."

Nor did Pope ever seem to desire a prolonged friendship with Voltaire, who, while he was in England and a guest of Lord Bolingbroke's, wrote Pope a letter of compliments and condolences, because the latter had lost the use of two of his fingers in an accident; Pope had almost been drowned and his right hand had been severely cut while he was returning from a visit to Lord Bolingbroke's. Voltaire had been entertained by Pope at his table, where his talk had been so gross that Mrs. Pope, Alexander's mother, had left the table. Here we have another man, widely

known, that the "Fool of Fame" did not cater to.

That Pope's regard did not vacillate with the fortune of his friends, we have his deep affection for Dr. Atterbury, who was exiled to France in 1723, as a testimony. Pope called on Dr. Atterbury while he was in prison and even served as a witness to try to establish his innocence, though Atterbury had been accused of having engaged in a secret correspondence with the Pretender's Minister in France. Pope could never creditably speak in public and, as a witness, he lost his self-possession and made several blunders; and though Dr. Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, spoke for two hours, with eloquence, pathos, and dignity, he was exiled. To Pope at parting he gave his Bible. Pope always believed in his innocence, and despite Atterbury's banishment, their correspondence, begun in 1716, continued to 1731. Just after his trial, the doctor wrote to Pope, "Whenever I go, you will lose a friend who loves and values you extremely," and in "Imitations of Horace" Pope writes:

"How pleasing Atterbury's softer hour;
How shined the soul, unconquer'd in the tower!"

Though in later years historians have decided that Atterbury was guilty in this instance, Pope showed common sense in protesting in the Bishop's innocence so long as he had no evidence to the contrary.

Another friend of Pope through many years, a Roman Catholic, was Caryll; their correspondence continued from 1710 to 1735. Caryll, however, was not a friend merely because he was a Catholic; for we find Pope writing to him June 29, 1714: "I find I have at least six Tory friends, three Whig friends, and two Roman Catholic friends, with many others of each

who will at least do me no harm." Pope made so many and lasting friendships that I can not mention all of them. With William Fortescue, Master of the Rolls, he corresponded for 23 years; and for 21 years he corresponded with Hugh Bethel. These long communications prove a mind so constituted as to continue in a duty; no ordinary mind would continue in an undertaking considered irksome.

And besides Pope's numerous correspondents, he had many invitations; but he was so troublesome a guest that servants often avoided and neglected him; he demanded coffee of his waiting woman constantly during the night; if there was a variety of dishes, he ate too much; he was angered when offered a dram, but he usually accepted; (nothing is left of his conversation that is pointed and solid, wise, or merry); he was fretful and easily displeased, and capriciously resentful; he was never excited to laughter by any merriment, either of others or his own. We wonder, when we read statements like this, how Pope could have ever had any friends or invitations. As everything seemed wrong with him and about him, there are only two possibilities why he had friends and invitations; he was invited and loved either through pity or because of his good sense. Pity usually leads to contempt, and I am sure none of us think of Pope with contempt. His accomplishments, in spite of handicaps and deformities, are little short of the marvelous.

Let us visualize a dinner at Twickenham on July 6, 1726, when the party consisted of "Pope, the most finished poet of the day; Swift, the deepest humorist; Bolingbroke, the most brilliant politician; Congreve, the wittiest writer of comedy; and Gay, the author of the most successful burlesque." We must admit that it takes more than pity to be able to assemble at one's

own table such a number of wits. It took more than pity to cause Pope to rise from a hated Catholic, barred from public schools, without riches, station, and training, and to place himself on equal footing with the most influential men of his time.

Just how would you or I feel if we could have associates such as these? Even Pope, himself, must have realized that his common sense had caused him to reach his station in life—that of influencing thought of the most influential men of his day! Just to know that one influences thought is reward enough; but to mix and mingle with such minds, is even more satisfying.

And of course a man so influential as Pope, was sure to have all kinds of critics, both good and bad. His was a nature to attract attention and comment. Many, no doubt, were wondering what he would write, or say, next. And there were few subjects that he failed to notice. He especially took note of the foibles and idiosyncrasies of mankind, knowing that he, himself, possessed them.

Pope belonged to the Scriblerus Club, which was composed of Lord Oxford, the Bishop of Rochester (Dr. Atterbury), Congreve, Arbuthnot, Gay; Addison was not disinclined to come into it. The object of the club was to ridicule all the false tastes in learning. Dr. Johnson says that "his early maturity of mind commonly united him with men older than himself." It does not appear that he lost a single friend by coldness or by injury; those who loved him once continued their kindness, at least, while he lived. And we are reminded of Pope's own words, when we read so much harsh criticism concerning him. In "Thoughts on Various Subjects," he tells us: "It often happens that those are the best people, whose characters have been most injured by slanderers: as we usually find that to be the sweetest

fruit which the birds have been pecking at!" And E. W. Edmunds says that "he whose soul could remain proof under the scorching glance of Swift's merciless eye, who could retain the admiration of that master of scorn through many years of friendship, must have been sterling at the core. And this was undoubtedly true of Pope! He was one of the few men whom Swift honoured, and what was true of Swift was equally true of all those contemporaries whose opinion was worth having. Detest his petty spite as we may, Pope was a hero to his friends."

V

IN HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD WOMEN

Pope had been accused of having had illicit relations with women and especially with his life-long friend, Martha Blount; Horace Walpole spoke of Martha as Pope's mistress. We are forced more than once to wonder if poor Pope could have had one redeeming quality! Of course I contend that he had common sense, but even I would be forced to admit that if he had no worthy attribute but common sense, that quality would certainly be a questionable one; for anyone would deny that a person could possess common sense who lacks every other virtue. But Pope, as all great and distinguished men of their day, was not the heinous rascal that some of his critics have painted him; he was rather the mark and butt of those who find a kind of fame by digging into the records of renowned men, producing every incident possible from their lives, and manifesting a ghoulish delight if any incident can be made to appear scandalous.

Excepting his mother, the two women perhaps most closely connected with Pope's life were Martha and Teresa Blount. Robert Carruthers says: "His connexion with the sisters, particularly Martha, was undoubtedly injurious to their reputation, but we have no doubt as to its innocence." Now Mr. Carruthers is considered as one of Pope's most just critics; his criticism is certainly wholesome; he at least allows Pope the privilege of a doubt. There are few people without skeletons in their closets, but suppositions and wild

conjectures, such as Leslie Stephen makes, will never drag out the skeletons. We should at least give a man the advantage of a doubt, and we should be willing to accept his declarations of honor, made in seeming sincerity, until we are otherwise convinced. Few of us accomplish all our intentions, and Shakespeare reminds us that "hell is paved with good intentions."

How many times we may find ourselves failing because of lack of will power to keep forging ahead in face of defeat and disappointments! There seemed to be no such term as "defeat" in Pope's vocabulary; he continued to fight on, even to the end of life, and against all kinds of odds. Even Martha Blount, whose friendship he had always treasured, seemed to ignore him at times, and friends proved untrue. Those whom he had befriended were quick to believe any false report about so famous a poet; for fame carries with it the prying, curious eyes of those who long for fame but who do not know how to achieve it and who will not pay the price to realize it.

Many of us, with natures small in comparison with such men as Pope, let the weather deter us; it is either too hot or too cold for us to keep working. Conditions must be favorable, or we give all kinds of excuses for our inability. Pope fought on in the face of opposition of any kind, mental, physical, or moral.

Lytton Strachey gives us the richest instance of Pope's amours, showing just how meticulous critics become in order to prove their knowledge of Pope. Strachey tells us the origin of the quarrel between Pope and Lady Mary Montagu, about which we have heard so many stories; he says that although the origin of the quarrel is uncertain, the lady declares that it was caused by her bursting into fits of laughter upon a declaration of passion by the poet. Another of his

stories traces the discord to a pair of sheets borrowed by Lady Mary from the poet's mother, and returned after a fortnight unwashed. Now this is getting Pope's life and character down to a fine point. It is almost a wonder Strachey did not say the lady borrowed Pope himself! But Pope had too much sense to be borrowed for long. However much he may have loved Lady Mary at one time, he had common sense enough to know that the unmarried state was best for him. He realized his deformity, and he seemed to believe that no woman would love him, a very sane conclusion.

He wrote to Martha Blount: "I have heard of women that have had a kindness for men of my make." He knew that the feeling would more likely only be one of kindness; he had too much reason to fool himself into believing that women love deformities, even though he must have had a rather low opinion of women in general. He, at least, was practical enough to evaluate his capacity for inspiring love.

And if anyone understands women, I believe that Pope did. Women as a rule are easy to understand; they are so shallow! Pope laughs at them and their shallow pretences. In his "Characters of Women" he says:

"And yet, believe me, good as well as ill,
Woman's at best a contradiction still."

And later,

"In men we various ruling passions find,
In women two almost divide the kind;
Those, only fixed, they first or last obey,
The love of pleasure, and the love of sway."

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Living in the reign of Queen Anne of England, as he did, the age of pretense and sham, Pope had plenty of instances of woman's shallowness. "The Rape of the Lock" gives a rather good picture of woman's mincing, simpering ways. A person of common sense usually detests affection and display of emotion. Though Pope may have been guilty of such conduct himself, and has been accused of it, not many of us like to see sham and pretense in others.

I have often wondered if there are any of us that are not hypocritical at times. No doubt Pope was, but I have often watched people and have seen that almost every act and word of theirs was not sincere. To myself, I was thinking, "What sham and pretense! Don't they know that others can understand their hypocrisy?"

And I think that any of us will be forced to admit that women exhibit this characteristic far more than men. Then I remember that the poor things were chattels until they were given the franchise, and I try to understand their shallowness. And since man is the bread-winner and usually busy at some kind of work, I am sure that we must admit that women in comparison with men, are far in the ascendancy as would-be social-climbers and pleasure-seekers; it is also true that social-climbing commonly goes hand in hand with shallow natures. Women, because of their "shallow pretenses," were a joke to Pope; and he usually laughed at them. Although he thought of woman as a kind of comedian, a "Fool to pleasure, yet a slave to fame," she is rather a fit subject for tragedy than for comedy. It is woman's tendency to notice the little things of life: one's manners, the hang of a dress, the outward appearance; and she too often judges accordingly. Women, with their gossip, have caused murders.

And Pope, in his "Characters of Women," an epistle

to a Lady, who is no other than Martha Blount, agrees with Martha that there is

“Nothing so true as what you once let fall,
Most women have no characters at all.”

From the way in which women, even her sister, had slandered Martha, there is no wonder she had come to this conclusion concerning women's characters, and that Pope agreed with her.

Martha and Teresa Blount had met Pope about 1711. They did not see so much of him in those days, for they were educated in France, in the city of Paris. Teresa was of the same age as Pope; Martha was two years younger. After Pope had met and begun to know the sisters, he writes to them, tells them of his daily life, his writings; he sends them presents, or he offers to invest money for them in the South Sea Company. Pope may have loved Martha Blount, but surmisings often lead nowhere. He wrote to Teresa that he did not like to go to see them, for his visits either made Martha uneasy or unkind. “Since one had to be sacrificed,” he wrote, “I believe we are all three agreed who shall be the person.” Earlier in the letter had he said, “My coming or not is a thing indifferent to both of you. But God knows it is far otherwise to me with respect to one of you.” But however much Pope may have cared for Martha, he seemed to know, through his commonsense reasoning, that her regard for him would necessarily be tinctured with pity. His sentiment may at times have gotten the best of him; but, in the long run, his far-seeing mind told him that marriage was not for him.

In 1717 Pope had confided to Teresa Blount that he wished to marry Martha; their correspondence ceased

after 1720; in 1725 Pope believed that Teresa had spread the scandalous reports concerning himself and Martha; and no doubt the reports were baseless. This belief in Teresa's perfidy toward her sister perhaps caused Pope to distrust women even more than he had before, and made him decide with Martha that "most women have no characters at all."

From 1729 to 1733 the Blounts again lived near the Popes; and, in spite of their opposition, Martha saw Pope at the houses of common friends. Her patience and resolution had worn down the opposition of her mother and sister, but there was an inevitable scandal aroused among Pope's enemies. No doubt Martha's ability to make herself agreeable to men of wit and imagination, such as Swift and Dr. Arbuthnot, caused women to speak of her in a tone of depreciation. That is the nature of most women: to speak disparagingly of those who surpass them in any way. Martha must also have given offence because she was proud; Lady Hervey called her a "piece of proud flesh;" of course "proud flesh" could have more than one meaning, but we will take it literally. Pope, now, in 1733, speaks of Martha's easy and beloved nature; and, in 1735, he dedicates his "Epistle on the Characters of Women" to her; in it he says:

"The generous God who wit and gold refines,
And ripens spirit as he ripens wine,
Kept dross for duchesses, the world shall know it,
To you gave sense, good humour, and a poet."

Nor did Pope ever forget Martha; at his death he left her, in his will, 1000 pounds, the furniture of his grotto, his garden urns, household goods, chattels, and plate, together with the interest, during her life, of all

his invested property. The will reflected the friendship of his life.

Pope knew that marriage is not always what it seems to be. He warns Martha of a wife's fate in his Epistle to her :

"Whole years neglected, for some months adored,
The fawning servant turns a haughty lord.
Ah, quit not the free innocence of life,
For the dull glory of a virtuous wife."

Practical common sense caused Pope to know that the adoration of the lover does not continue, as a usual thing, in the husband, and that many wives, often neglected, have little to boast of, unless it be their virtue. But Pope, being a man, did not set himself up as different from other men in that he would always adore his lady-love.

Martha is said to have neglected Pope in the time of his decay; but though he was often offended by her inattention," he could have found no other that might have filled her place; it was too late to transfer his confidence or fondness." In his "January and May" Pope tells us that a "wife is the peculiar gift of heaven," and in "The Wife of Bath" he speaks of the "blessings of a prudent wife."

The purpose of Pope in "The Rape of the Lock," as he tells us, is to laugh at "the little unguarded follies of the female sex." "The freaks, and humours, and spleen, and vanity of women, as they embroil families in discord, and fill houses with disquiet, do more to obstruct the happiness of life in a year than the ambition of the clergy in many centuries. It has been well observed that the misery of man proceeds not from any single rush of overwhelming evil, but from small vex-

ations continually repeated." And these "vexations oft repeated" are those caused by women. Of course Pope resented woman's affectation! Who would not? Certainly a person with a practical, all-seeing mind as Pope had, took note of woman's affected manners. In this poem he writes:

"The fair ones feel such maladies as these,
When each new night-dress gives a new disease."

The thought is tragic in its ridiculousness, but it is all too true; just as Belinda pretended wrath at having the lock dissevered, there are women shallow enough to pretend a disease in order to display a new night-dress; and woman's tendency to display her affection shows the same narrow view of her duty as her love of her lap-dog. Pope says:

"Not louder shrieks to pitying Heaven are cast,
When husbands, or when lap-dogs breathe their last."

Pope knew that some women pay more attention to their lap-dogs than to their husbands; therefore he throws dogs and husbands into the same category. Because, in this poem, Pope depicts woman as foolish, silly, fond of gossip and coquetry, as worldly and shallow, he has spirits to guide them and to keep them from going far wrong; and heaven knows that many of them need good fairies or spirits to direct them!

Pope cared little for the mere beauty of woman, which she considers her trump card; in this poem he asks:

"Say, why are beauties praised and honored most,
The wise man's passion, and the vain man's toast?
Why decked with all that land and sea afford,
Why angels called, and angel-like adored?"

He answered himself in these lines :

“How vain are all these glories, all our pains,
Unless good sense preserve what beauty gains.”

And later he mentions that “charm strikes the sight, but merit wins the soul.” Good sense means so much to Pope, and it is through his own good sense that he is able to separate the gold from the dross! Pope, however, seldom ever accords the attribute of good sense to woman; Martha Blount was perhaps one exception. In his “Essay on Criticism” he again shows woman’s shallowness and lack of judgment; he says that some value “books, as women, for dress.” He knew that it is usually woman’s nature to judge from exteriors; too few of them take Holmes’ advice :

“Look in his face to read thy neighbor’s soul,
Not on his garments to detect a hole.”

In the “Wife of Bath” woman is even more belittled than in “The Rape of the Lock,” if that be possible. There are few sins or faults that Pope does not accord to her. He says :

“For never was it given to mortal man,
To lie so boldly as woman can.” ✓

Sometimes we are tempted to believe that Pope was right, but Leslie Stephen seems to think that no one could out-lie Pope himself. These lines, however, contain far too much truth :

“Heaven gave to women the peculiar grace,
To spin, to weep, and cully the human race.” 2

Pope decides that woman is "best seen in Private life alone;" for she is bred to disguise; in "Public 'tis she hides." Now that is woman exactly! Man is not usually so affected as woman, but sometimes we wonder if woman is not almost entirely affectation, make belief,

"To see, be seen, to tell, and gather tales."¹

Yet, even in Pope's time, in the early eighteenth century, woman was wise enough to give her husband a curtain-lecture occasionally, and Pope had evidently heard about some of those lectures; for he writes:

"I prevail'd, and would be in the right,
Or curtain-lectures made a restless night."²

The wife is speaking in the following lines, giving a realistic picture of woman in general; of course Pope excepts women with common sense. The Wife says:

"It pleased the Lord to take my spouse at last.
I tore my gown, I soil'd my locks with dust,
And beat my breast as wretched widows—must.
Before my face my handkerchief I spread,
To hide the flood of tear I did—not shed."

These lines, rich and racy, are so realistic that we can visualize the woman in them! Women do what they are expected to do, not as duty, but when it comes to society. Pope sees through their shallow pretences. People do not usually fool a common-sense mind, for a practical, rational mind is able to diagnose its own cases. It does not need to accept second-hand symptoms.

¹Wife of Bath (From Chaucer).

²*Ibid.*

Pope knew, too, that he could say of many a man :

“Oft has he blush’d from ear to ear for shame,
That e’er he told a secret to his dame.”

He knew women can keep a secret in only one way :
keep it going.

The Wife of Bath must have realized her own short-coming, for she says after one of her husbands dies :

“His soul I hope, enjoys eternal glory,
For here on earth I was his purgatory.”

But the wife seems so heartless as to be rejoicing, rather than boasting of the fact, that she has been “his purgatory.” Woman of to-day is proving herself more and more the woman that Pope pictured for us. Many women of to-day refuse to consider wedlock as binding; love, a sensual, overpowering passion, holds sway in many women’s hearts. Woman could truthfully say to-day as Pope had the Wife say :

“How quaint an appetite in woman reigns !
Free gifts we scorn and love what costs us pain.”

Too many light, shallow minds are scorning the love of a devoted and honorable husband and getting their fingers burned by playing with fire. Playing with fire may be very interesting, but it is not always safe.

In speaking of Narcissa³ Pope keeps in mind that woman is a “contradiction still.” He mentions that “now Conscience chills her, and now Passion burns, and Atheism and Religion take their turns;” he calls woman a “very heathen in the carnal part, yet still a

³Character of Women.

sad, good Christian at her heart." So, in spite of her contradictions, woman may be a Christian at heart, if she have a heart. Thus we see that Pope rather laughs at than condemns poor silly woman, full of "shallow pretences."

In this same poem Papillia is a typical woman, a being who seldom knows what she wants. She longs for the shades. Her lover purchases a park, only to see her bathed in tears and crying, "Oh, odious, odious Trees!" as though we could have a park without trees!

But when Pope comes to speak of his mother, he seems to have forgotten all of woman's faults. His love and care of his mother was ideal. During the winter and spring of 1718 Pope remained at Chiswick in a deep solitude, several miles from London, working at his translations and watching tenderly over his mother, whose health was so excessively precarious that his life with her was like "watching the rising and falling of a taper in its last socket." To the Earl of Oxford, in 1725, Pope in a letter says that he expects his mother to die at any time. In his attention to her wants he seems to have been unwearied, rarely leaving the house, though the confinement must have been detrimental to his own health, which was also then very precarious; nor could he pay any visits which, as a rule, so agreeably relieved his labors.

In spite of his anxieties and labors, he found time to be charitable to a Mrs. Cope, who had been deserted by her husband and who had been obliged to settle in a destitute condition in France. Here Pope and a few friends helped to support her. For this charitable act some biographers have tried to unearth a scandal. Mrs. Cope, a cousin of Caryll's, had been introduced by him to Pope in 1711. Pope had been charmed with her wit, vivacity, and good sense, an attribute, as I have said,

which he accorded to but few women. He contributed 20 pounds a year toward her support until her death; he also interested others in her behalf. She died in 1728 of cancer of the breast, and the expenses of her last illness and for her funeral were defrayed by Pope.

Although Courthope says: "We must remember his (Pope's) sensitive, fanciful, and romantic disposition; his love of mystification; his inveterate habit of using every incident in his writing." I wonder if Pope did use every incident; if so, it seems queer that we hear so much of his questionable and so little of his charitable deeds. The commendable should be given its place and the scandalous need not be aired.

All Pope's biographers are charitable enough, however, to concede Pope's love of his mother. Just after his mother's death, in 1733, Pope wrote to Fortescue: "It is indeed a grief to me which I can not express, and for which I should hate my own heart if I did not feel and yet wish no friend I have ever should feel. All our passions are inconsistencies, and our very reason is no better." Pope's inconsistency was in his grief, since he realized that his mother, aged 93, was freed from earthly pains and ills; but his love was idealistic. He shows common sense in hoping that his friends may never experience such a loss as his.

Pope placed a monument to the memory of his father and his mother in the parish church at Twickenham, and in a secret part of his grounds erected an obelisk with this inscription:

"Ah Editha!

Matrum Optima!

Mulierum Amantissima!

Vale!"

Pope always shows common sense in coming straight to his point. He knows what he wants to say and he says it. I am sure any deep, comprehensive mind admires the person who is able to come straight to the point. There are people who seem to imagine that "much speaking" is the sign of wisdom; some, however, have the ability to say more in ten words than others can say in thousands of words. Too often we come away from an hour's lecture bewailing the paucity of thought. A person who speaks from the heart thinks and cares little for his method and form of presentation; his mind is centered upon his thought. Pope cared little for "padding," mere ravings, or descriptive passages of beauty; the thought, in relation to man, was his chief interest. There could be no higher tribute paid to a mother than the above few words, and because of Pope's judgment, it did not take hours for him to express his sentiments.

VI

WITH REGARD TO POLITICS

Pope's taste, as a whole, was repugnant to politics; he was too independent to be influenced by party spirit and strife. He writes to Caryll, June 2, 1713, "I confess I scorn narrow souls of all parties." He had friends both among the Whigs and the Tories, for he believed in keeping the "middle state." In his "Imitations of Horace" he says:

"He knows to live, who keeps the middle state,
And neither leans on this side nor on that."

Again in this poem he speaks of sliding back to his native moderation and of winning his way by yielding to the tide. Pope used practical judgment in realizing that he, in a political sense, must yield to the tide; for Catholics were certainly not favored in his day, and Pope had sense enough to know that there was no use in his trying to resist; there had been Catholic uprisings but they had always been suppressed, for the English would tolerate nothing Catholic since they were freed from Stuart tyranny and suppression. For Pope to have taken part in politics would have been to him little more than "kicking against the pricks." A broad-minded person must realize that narrow political views, and they are usually narrow, do not tend to uplift mankind or to pour oil on turbid waters. The greatest minds may have been great statesmen, but not great politicians.

In a letter to Bishop Atterbury, of November 20, 1717, Pope gives us his idea of politics. He says: "I will tell you my politics in a few words. In my politics, I think no further than how to prefer the peace of my life, in any government under which I live." Pope, realizing his utter helplessness in a government which legislated against his religion, knew that the safest policy for him was to take no sides; when he was older and had won fame to such an extent that he did not so much fear the government, he joined with Lord Bolingbroke in the Opposition against George II; but trust Pope to have judgment enough to provide for his own protection and safety! Some of the greatest men of our time have come to realize the utter nonsense of becoming fanatical with regard to politics. There have been fanatics who have become so enthusiastic over elections that death and murders have been the result. I can not imagine a man of Pope's ability ever becoming so politically rabid as to be mixed up in an election broil. The men with soundest judgment think things through; they do not attempt to kill their way through. A politician, however, not only joins himself to a party and is supposed to support it, but he also knows and understands the actual condition of affairs in his own land, both past and present; and in this respect Pope was a politician; but he was not a politician in the sense in which he speaks of one in his "Essay on Man." Here he tells us that they take or influence men, not because they themselves are wise, but because others are weak. How much sense there is in the statement! Politicians would certainly be out of business if there were not the weak, the easily influenced, who are mere straws in the wind for them to waft about! In a letter to Lyttleton, written in 1739, Pope speaks of politicians as being even worse than people of little real worth.

He writes: "God knows merely to be popular, that is, to be at the head of a mob (for partyes are but higher and more interested mobs) is as much below a Prince as keeping low company is below a gentleman, though the first of the club." This was written after he had joined the Opposition; but he was evidently, at heart, still disgusted with politics and political parties. I could never believe that Pope ever took an interest in politics for his own advancement and popularity; in fact, I feel that the only interest Pope ever had in politics was due to the influence of Lord Bolingbroke, who always had a great attraction for him.

I am also sure that Pope never sacrificed belief for politics and probable advancement. When Queen Anne died, in 1714, and the House of Hanover acceded to the throne, politics changed; many literary characters took part in political conflicts. In a letter to Caryll, written October 17, 1713, Pope writes: "The little I have done, and the great respect I bear Mr. Steele as a man of wit, has rendered me a suspected Whig to some of the overzealous and violent. But as old Dryden said before me, it is not the violent I design to please; and in very truth, sir, I believe they will all find me, at long run, a mere papist." Just after this, Lord Bolingbroke had fled to France; Swift had retired to Ireland; Addison and Steele had been summoned to take part in the political conflict. Pope, watching and understanding the strife, took sides with neither party.

He showed sense in making friends with Addison and Steele, but he broke that friendship rather than be thought violent and over-zealous. In November of 1715 Pope again writes to Caryll: "This town is in so prodigious a ferment of politics, that I, who never meddled with any, am absolutely incapable of all conversation in it." July 13, 1714, he had written to the

same friend: "We live in an age where it is criminal to be moderate; and where no man can be allowed to be just to all men." Yet historians picture this period as one in which man had practically full freedom of the press and speech. Although George I had come to the throne with a distrust of all Tories and for 47 years Tories were out of office, and though most of England was aristocratic, the spirit of aristocracy and the spirit of popular rights seemed to have arrived at a perfect harmony. It was the special function of the Eighteenth Century to diffuse common sense and reasonableness in life and thought; freedom was allowed to each individual. So we can understand why Pope, though a Catholic, was not afraid to express his sentiments.

Later in this letter to Caryll, he says that "perhaps to be in the right so very violently may be of worse consequence than to be easily and quietly in the wrong." And then he gives us this honorable and common sense statement: "While the most honest and moral of each party think me no ill man, I can easily support it, though the most violent and mad of all parties rise up to throw dirt at me." This practical, sane conclusion should be the desire of all honorable upright citizens. There is a sincerity in the remark that causes me again to doubt some of the harsh criticisms against Pope.

Perhaps Addison and Steele helped to raise themselves to prominence by gambling with politics, but Pope in his "Temple of Fame" exclaims, "Oh! grant me an honest fame, or grant me none!" The great German poet Goethe has been censured for giving up his independence to become a courtier to Charles August of Weimar. Pope, more than once, could have bettered his fortune in life by becoming a sycophant; but he did not; and in spite of the fact that he was dead before

Goethe was born, Pope showed more judgment than Goethe; he knew that a courtier's life did not tend to develop individuality; and never, under any condition, would he sell himself for money and advancement.

In his "Farewell to London" he writes of his friend Gay that he

"Loves all mankind but flatters none
And so may starve with me."

Pope knew that politics requires flattery, deceitful words, and he knew that he gave "flattery only where flattery was due;" therefore, his fate, if left to the voice of the people, might end in his starvation, even though he loved all people. Addison had suspicions that Pope flattered the Tories; he thought that he was too much of this party; but some of the Tories had even suspected Pope's principles, because he had contributed to the "Guardian," carried on by Steele. All evidence, however, goes to prove that at this early date, about 1715, Pope kept his "middle state," realizing that there was perfection in neither one side nor the other.

But in 1737 Pope seems to have forgotten the precaution of former days. His age must have caused his seeming neglect of self-preservation. And as I have said, the dominating personality of Lord Bolingbroke had its influence. Anyway, about 1737 the Prince of Wales formed a band to oppose his father, King George II, because the latter considered his son a fool and refused to shower as much money on the Prince as the latter expected. The Prince was a profligate, unrefined but generous; he had a passion for women; he gambled; and he evidently possessed a superiority complex. Advised by Lord Bolingbroke, he attempted to win Pope to his ranks; he called upon him and stayed

four or five hours. In 1738 Pope's villa was chosen as the scene of the Opposition's counsels. But he wrote to Swift December 30, 1736, before joining the Opposition: "If I love them, it is because they honour some of those whom I and the world have lost, or are losing." A little later Pope gives us his last satire, named from the year in which it was published, "Seventeen Hundred and Thirty-eight." Pope was then entangled in the Opposition, a follower of the Prince, who had dined at his house; and he was a friend of many who censured the ministry. We, who respect and admire his common sense, hope there was no especial significance in the distich that Pope inscribed on the collar of the Prince's dog:

"I am his Highness' dog at Kew,
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?"

Carruthers tells us that the "poet's windows were actually broken one day when he had Lord Bolingbroke and Lord Bathurst at dinner with him." If this be true, the Opposition could not have been so very popular. Pope in his "Epilogue to the Satires" speaks of this incident. He says:

"Or each new-pension'd sycophant pretend
To break my windows, if I treat a friend,
Then wisely plead, to me they meant no hurt,
But 'twas my guest at whom they threw the dirt."

Pope was able to see through such pretence and sham; the dirt landed where it was meant to land. Being able to understand weak excuses and evaluate them at their true worth, he accepted them only at face value.

He did not, however, lose himself for long in this

hazardous undertaking of seating the Prince upon the throne. He must have realized the utter impossibility of such a rake as the Prince's ever becoming king, and he gave up the project. Also about this time Paul Whitehead, a small poet, was summoned before the House of Lords to answer for his poem, "Manners," and although he was later dismissed, Pope probably understood that the whole process was intended to intimidate him; anyway, he had common sense enough never again to attempt to join the patriot with the poet, nor draw his pen upon statesmen.

But all through these perilous times, while Pope was a friend to Lord Bolingbroke, Walpole, the minister, was not his enemy. Walpole and Pope had much in common; both possessed an unusual amount of common sense and both knew the use of cynicism. So, even though Pope might have forgotten the precaution of former years, he was still able to keep the "middle state" and have friends from among both Whigs and Tories. The day may come when officials may be nominated and elected because of their true worth and efficiency and not because of their party beliefs. When that day comes, then people may be able to understand Pope's attitude toward politics. Sound judgment, not party feeling, will then be the deciding factor!

And when and if that time ever comes, when a man, or woman, is chosen because of true worth, not for party belief, our knowledge has already begun to exert itself, and our progress may be rapid. George Washington warned us against political parties and party strife. Party strife causes our country to be held in disrepute. How well our first president could see into the future! He warned us that party strife would give help to our enemies, and it did that very thing while Dewey was opposing our commander-in-chief, President

Franklin Roosevelt. But people are so selfish and inconsistent that they forget the common good when they want to be in the limelight and become big political leaders. How contemptible some of them become to real people!

And during the Hitler time, it paid people not to have political beliefs, unless they were those of the Hitler regime. If we study political parties, we can see that they can lead us into all kinds of difficulties. It is very easy to see it is sometimes safest to take no side; but do as Pope did—sit on the fence and keep quiet, though you may be laughing all inside.

VII

UNDER FIRE OF OPINION

Man after man has studied the life of Pope and given us biographies of him. This line of Pope biographers started in 1745, headed by William Ayre; in 1751 Warburton gives us his edition of Pope with some biographical matter; in 1769 we have Ruffhead taking up the subject; in 1756 Warton had published his "Essay on Pope;" he meant to follow it immediately with a second volume, but Warburton's attacks, concerning the veracity of his statements, caused Warton, through fear of Warburton, to delay in publishing his second volume, which came out in 1782; then in 1769 Warburton supplied much of the material for Ruffhead's account of Pope, although Elwin and Croker do not value Warburton's opinions. In 1781 Dr. Johnson gives us his work on Pope; Spence, the last of Pope's contemporaries, in his *Anecdotes*, published in 1820, gives brief sketches of Pope; in 1806 Bowles, who "was a school-boy at Wincheester when Warton was headmaster," left his estimate of Pope; Roscoe, in 1824, wrote a book on Pope; in 1854 and 1857 Robert Carruthers, after making a rather full and careful study of Pope, gave us two editions; Sir Charles W. Dilke, from 1850 to 1875, brought forth material that had not been known; but perhaps the best and fullest works on Pope are those by Elwin, Croker, and Court-hope, published from 1871 to 1889, and consisting of ten volumes. J. W. Mackail, formerly professor of poetry in Oxford University, says, "I remember, some

five and thirty years ago, spending an evening with Mr. Courthope and Mr. Lang, when they fought over the old debate as to Pope's poetical quality, and left it a drawn battle. Mr. Courthope's view has been fully and repeatedly set forth by himself, in his life of Pope, in his Oxford lectures, and again in his *History of English Poetry*."

We have been told that his disorder was spleen; another writer terms it nervousness; another irritability. We have been informed that he was "irascible, capricious, peevish, and resentful;" that he was "wanton in his attacks, and unjust in his censures; that he could scarcely drink tea without a stratagem, because he so delighted in artifice in his dealings; that his cunning descended to such parsimony as to writing poems on the back of letters, by which he perhaps saved five shillings in so many years;" that although he occasionally gave a splendid dinner, and could do so on an income of 800 pounds a year, his entertainment was often scanty, even to his friends, before two of whom, while guests in his house, he was guilty of setting a single pint, and after having taken two small glasses himself, upon retiring, remarked, "Gentlemen, I leave you to your wine."

Lytton Strachey speaks of Pope as the "fiendish monkey, ladling out spoonfuls of boiling oil and not being careful to whom he served it." Leslie Stephen says of him: "Poor Pope was always a hand-to-mouth liar, and took the first pretext that offered, without caring for consistency." He speaks of Pope's having "enough sins to answer for;" he calls Pope an obscene character, a vain person, and many such opprobrious names; but in a short chapter, called "The End," he calms down and allows Pope to die," surrounded by friends," and even Stephen must allow him to die peacefully. And Leslie Stephen is not alone when it

comes to criticizing Pope harshly; Warton, Croker, Elwin, and Macaulay are especially bitter in much of their criticism. Macaulay speaks of Pope's "spite and envy, being thinly disguised by benevolent sentiments."


Dr. Johnson seems to think that Pope was often unjustly criticized, believing that those who censured him purposely tried to find him worthy of censure. He says: "Those who could not deny that he was excellent, would rejoice to find that he was not perfect." But Lytton Strachey seems to think people were averse to criticizing Pope through pity; he says, "Most people preferred not to use their power against a libellous rhymers, who was physically incapable of protecting himself, and who, as a Roman Catholic, lay open to legal pressure."

This long list of names of men who have made a study of Pope, shows that he was worthy of much consideration. Biographer after biographer admits Pope's possession of common sense. Dr. Johnson says of him: "Of his intellectual character, the constituent and fundamental principle was Good Sense. He had likewise genius." But when Dr. Johnson believed that Lord Bolingbroke had inspired Pope to write the "Essays on Man," he said of it: "This essay affords an egregious instance of the predominance of genius, the dazzling splendor of imaginery, and the seductive powers of eloquence. Never was penury of knowledge and vulgarity of sentiment so happily disguised. The reader finds his mind full, though he learns nothing." And so we find Johnson, who admits Pope's common sense, joins the throng of critics who seem to rejoice "to find that Pope was not perfect."

Bowles, in speaking of the "Essay on Criticism," remarks: "Most of the observations in this Essay are just, and certainly evince good sense, an extent of read-

ing, and powers of comparisons, considering the age of the author, extraordinary." Bowle's estimate of Pope, written about 1800, was left unchallenged for 13 years. Hazlitt, too, speaks of the "Essay on Criticism" as the essence of wit and sense.

So we must conclude that it is his common sense which has caused this interest in Pope. According to the eighteenth century definition of common sense, as I have said before, it is the ability to know how to defend one's self, and to keep from being imposed upon by gross contradictions, palpable inconsistencies, and masked impostures; and Pope, in his acceptance of others' opinions, certainly proves to us that he knew how to meet censure or approval. He says in his "Moral Essays:":



"Did some more sober critic come abroad?
If wrong, I smiled; if right, I kiss'd the rod:
Pains, reading, study, are their just pretense,
And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense."

Pope had sense enough to know when criticism was applicable to him, and he was ready to accept it, to "kiss the rod." But, as a whole, he did not make his criticism personal; he believed in criticizing men's vices, not their physical defects, as some of his critics did; but he fought back when unjustly criticized. And although Pope's satire is often bitter, even rude, we surely can not seriously censure the disease-racked body, whom Colley Cibber termed "the wasp of Twickenham," for most of us admire people who have resentment enough to resist being trampled upon.

But few can boast of having trampled upon Pope! Mrs. Racket, his half-sister, said that he knew no fear. After he had written the "Dunciad," he would walk

out alone with Bounce, his dog, and with pistols in his pocket; he told Bounce, that with pistols, the least man in England was above a match for the largest! He surely had a need for pistols, for some were angry enough to murder him at this time. But this fearlessness of consequences was shown in all Pope's writings. If he did not see his way clearly, he planned and schemed until he found a way, and his common sense guided him so that he was able to get the best of his opponents. After he had written his "Dunciad," many people were so incensed that one might believe that Pope was in danger of losing his life; but we see that he was equal to any opposition; he evidently had sense enough to manage his own affairs. It is great to be able to "hold your own" against all opposition!

I many times wonder how much any of us would accomplish if we heeded all criticism, good or bad, and tried to do what public opinion dictated! In fact, would we do anything? For, when one applauds and encourages, another may be advising, "You better keep quiet!"

There is no doubt of it; some of the bitterest critics are those people who do not possess a single talent! Just as it has been said, "Old maids can tell best how to rear children." But anyone who is determined to accomplish something, must be able to meet such criticism and often ignore it as the ravings of a jealous and envious nature. Leaders must be guided by their own sense of right and wrong, else they will get little done.

All my life I have done those things, and even more, that those who should have encouraged me, have objected to my doing. We must fight on in spite of hindrances and drawbacks; and it is the mind with common sense that doesn't take advice from inferior minds. If advice is good, it may and should come

from any source. I have been inspired by great Negro leaders and philanthropists probably more than by white people, because I realized the difficulties under which the Negro worked and succeeded. It takes sense to treat all people alike.

There is no wonder that Pope resented personal criticism; it is enough to irritate the best of men, especially if one realizes his own superiority over the one criticizing; criticism of an inferior to a superior mind reminds us of a poodle's trying to "lord it over" a mastiff. Pope accepted criticism when he knew that it was of a superior type. When Dennis criticized his "Essay on Criticism", which Pope claimed to have written at the age of twenty, Pope wrote to his publisher that he would alter some of the lines censured, for they needed it. He continued, "I will make my enemy do me a kindness where he meant an injury." This shows a commonsense attitude. Pope was also willing and ready to give credit where credit was due. He wrote Caryll concerning the translation of his *Iliad*, that he was glad to have the advantage of daily consultation and conversation with so "good a critic and friend" as Caryll had proved himself to be. Pope told Bridges in a letter that he preferred the authority of one true poet to that of twenty critics or commentators.

When Spence was Prelector of Poetry at Oxford, he criticized Pope's *Odyssey* without malevolence, and Pope was so little offended that he sought the acquaintance of the writer; and Spence, from that time on, lived in great familiarity with him, attended him in his last hours, and compiled memorials of his conversation. The above incident shows that Pope did not resent adverse criticism, if given in the right spirit; he resented Addison's criticism, when given, because he felt that it was unjust and due to jealousy. It is only

the little mind that resents criticism which is not flattering; the commonsense mind uses adverse criticism, making it constructive, not destructive.

Most of the men who have considered Pope a subject worthy of thought, but who perhaps have most harshly criticized him, are scarcely known in comparison with him; he is known and quoted far and wide, even unconsciously, by men both of low and of high rank. These men, like Boswell, gain most of their glory by writing of Pope, as Boswell did by writing of Johnson. We must not forget when Pope wrote his poems and letters! It was a hundred years or more before most of these men tried their hand at writing. It seems an easier thing to censure than to commend. People criticize actions that they could not begin to accomplish. There is a tendency among men to delight in man's fallibility rather than to rejoice in his infallibility, and such was the tendency of most of Pope's critics.

There was a wide difference of opinion when Pope published his "Essay on Criticism." Wanting to establish the fact of his precocity, he said that he wrote the Essay *fast* in 1707. As it did not attract much attention at first, Pope tried to prove an alibi by saying, "Not one gentleman in 60, even of liberal education, could understand it." Dennis, whose opinions on literary questions were listened to with interest, because of the malignity and envy he felt towards Pope's Essay, started the longest and the bitterest quarrel in Pope's literary life. But Pope's common sense always came to his rescue; in spite of Dennis and his criticism, in spite of the seeming neglect of his poem, Pope ordered copies to be sent to several noblemen of taste. Curiosity was aroused and the sales began; and Dr. Johnson says of this Essay that "it is one of Pope's

greatest works, and if he had written nothing else, it would have placed him among the first critics and the first poets," and that "it exhibits every mode of excellence that can embellish or dignify didactic composition." Ignoring the fact that De Quincey pronounces this Essay "the feeblest and least interesting of Pope's writings" and Leslie Stephen speaks of Pope's "probably unequalled power of coining aphorisms out of commonplaces," anyone who has read the Essay must realize the commonsense ideas found in it.

Pope's "Essay on Man" also brought forth a wide difference of opinion. Dr. Johnson found little merit in it because he believed Lord Bolingbroke had inspired it. But as opposed to Johnson's evaluation of this poem, Voltaire calls it "the most beautiful, the most useful, the most sublime didactic poem that has ever been written in any language." Courthope says that this essay is known for harmonious rhetoric and terse expression; it is filled with epigrammatic statements of a multitude of truths.

Pope has been accused of so many things that a person must learn to work out his own conclusions when he comes to a study of Pope. And if we are to decide whether or not he had common sense, we must not stop to find if he ever laughed or not; but we must study his life and works for evidence of sound judgment. Knowing that his aim was to adapt sound to sense, we are forced to conclude that Pope could not have entirely failed in all instances, although he was often inconsistent. And although E. W. Edmunds thinks that Pope's most notable defect was his lack of a true sense of humor, we can think of a laughter that speaks through the eyes; one that becomes audible, perhaps in loud bursts of laughter; and, the most satisfying to its

owner, the laughter within; I always think of Pope as possessing this "laughter within," caused by his ability to perceive and weigh the follies of life.

Pope has been accused of making cat's paws of Fenton and Broome in having his *Odyssey* written and published. I have followed their correspondence, and Broome, January 2, 1725, writes to Pope: "Dear Sir, I assure you that the chief satisfaction I have in the conclusion of the *Odyssey* arises from the certainty that my name will be read with yours by posterity." Then there was a period of trouble and misunderstanding; but October 29, 1735, we have Broome again writing: "I have forgot we ever had any difference. Let us make amends for seven years' coldness by loving seven times more warmly and affectionately." And later he says: "As to fame, I recollect with pleasure and acknowledge with gratitude that you highly advanced it. If I could invent stronger terms to express my sentiments, I would use them." These letters do not show that Broome was such a cat's paw after all. At least he recognized Pope's superiority and he loved him for it.

I am sure that, if any of us, at the present time, could know that we should become the subject of discussion and thought, as Pope has done, and have biographies written of us, we should feel that we possess at least one attribute, that of common sense.

VIII

IN HIS LETTERS

Though Pope has been censured for calling in all his letters and having them printed, and has been accused of changing some and writing other fictitious ones, we wonder why all the flurry and excitement. A man certainly has the right to call in his letters if the recipients are kind enough to return them; he certainly has a right to have them published if he can get a publisher. Yet some critics prefer to take Curll's word in preference to Pope's. Leslie Stephen gives us a rather startling picture of Curll. He says that "Curll was chief of all piratical booksellers, and versed in every dirty trick of the Grub-street trade." He tells us of Amory, who professed to have lodged in Curll's house. Amory says that Curll was drunk as often as he could drink for nothing, and intimate in every London haunt of vice. He had lost his ears for some obscene publications. "In 1716 Pope, with Lintot, had a meeting with Curll in the hopes of suppressing a publication calculated to injure his friends. The party had some wine, and Curll, on going home, was very sick. He declared that Pope had given him an emetic by way of a coarse practical joke." Pope's account of the whole affair is ludicrous, and it is plain that he has no respect for Curll. As early as 1716 Pope wrote to Teresa Blount, showing that Curll even then was no object of respect. Whatever were Pope's infirmities, we can say with Burns and apply his lines to Pope:

“Misled by fancy’s meteor ray,
By passion driven,
But yet the light that led astray,
Was light from Heaven.”

However, the verse does not apply altogether to Pope, for I do not think that he was misled by fancy’s meteor ray. But any writer is to a great extent “by passion driven”, for writers are conceded to think and feel more strongly than the average person. Though many critics claim that Pope was led astray, we do believe that Pope was inspired by a “light from heaven”, and that light is common sense—a light that would save the world if more could possess it. All writers are tormented souls easily satisfied with the best of everything, as some one has written. “Mr. Edmund Curll has been exercised in a blanket, whereof the common prints have given some account.” Chalmers called it a well-earned whipping. So it is very evident that even then Curll was not well-liked. In 1713, in the month of December, Pope had written to Caryll and had asked him to return his letters; he had said that the object of the request was “to put them out of the power of Curll.” He had feared Curll then.

Later Mr. Cromwell had given Mrs. Thomas some of Pope’s letters, written to him; she had sold them to Curll, who published them in 1726. Pope, knowing this, decided to call in all his letters. In 1727 he got many in; he burned three parts in four of them. He said: “A bookseller can get all a person’s letters at little cost. Any scandal is sure of a reception, and any enemy who sends it is screened from discovery. The better your reputation is, the more your name will cause them to be demanded. As an author, you are deprived of

choosing what to publish; as a man, you are deprived of the right even over your own sentiments; as a member of society, your private conduct, your domestic concerns, your family secrets, your passions, are laid bare to the censure of the whole world. Printing private letters is the highest offence against society, as it renders the most dear and intimate intercourse of friend with friend open to curiosity. We can not but conclude that every honest man will wish for laws against such."

Pope knew that he had no relatives to see to his letters after his death. No doubt he had a vision of all the future critics, soaring unconcernedly about so long as he were alive, ready to pounce down upon his character as soon as he should die. In a letter to Caryll, Pope says, realizing the fruits of envy, "All unsuccessful writers are your declared enemies, and probably some successful ones your secret enemies." Pope's common sense had led him to see that there are few minds big enough to have no thoughts of jealousy and envy.

Again in 1729 Pope decided that he could prove his character by having all his letters published; and under the title of P. T., he managed to have his enemy Curll do it for him. Pope must have relished the idea of making Curll his publisher, for he had the sporting instinct, which delights "in the successful working of traps and springs." Elwin and Croker would have us believe that Pope's object in publishing his letters was to shield himself by calumniating others. I do not see any reason for such a belief. What would Pope gain by injuring others? I think, as Pope said more than once, that he did not wish them to fall into Curll's hands in the original, and that he realized they would help to prove his character and actual importance; for the

letters show the many and famous friends Pope had and through what length of time he held those friendships. In spite of the fact that De Quincey speaks of the triviality of the letters, and Elwin writes: "The vice of the letters published by Pope is not merely that they are studied, but that they are barren and insincere," I am sure that most of them are letters that few of us would not like to be able to write.

Pope writes to Caryll, July 8, 1729: "I thank God, above all, for finding so few parts of my life that I need to be ashamed of, no correspondence or intimacies with any but good deserving people, and no opinion that I need to blush for, or actions, as I hope, that need to make my friends blush for me." And as to Pope's obscenity in letter writing, which I have mentioned above, I found the most obscene language, of any I ever knew Pope to use, in his description of the meeting, when Curll had accused Pope of having given him an emetic. It is true that Pope used some rather obscene words in this description, but there is no more reason for accusing Pope of obscenity than Shakespeare, who seems to glory in the subject of lechery and a few certain words that we would call vulgar to-day. But we must take into account the age in which the two men lived, and if we label such literature as obscene, we must put the Bible in the same category. Leslie Stephen must be unusually modest when he speaks of the obscenity of Pope.

I am sure that Pope never had an idea that he would be accused after his death of being obscene; he, however, realized that much of his prose, especially his letters, was artificial. He writes to Swift in 1729 that it was a task for him to be natural and conversational, because he always tried to say things "prettily" and

"hesitates to use heart-felt convictions for pointed sentences." Again he says: "I am so awkward at writing letters, to such as expect me to write like a wit, that I take any course to avoid it. 'Tis to you only, and a few such honest men, I like to open myself." But it seems to me that Pope could not have avoided letter writing so very much, for he wrote volumes of letters in his life time.

Most of the letters to Cromwell were written while he was under twenty years of age, and they are wonderful epistles for that age! They show variety of style, affecting sentiment, and justness of criticism, and certainly those that Cromwell gave to Mrs. Thomas were not meant for the eyes of the public! And although Croker thinks Pope revised all his letters, except, of course, those which Mrs. Thomas had had published, there is no reason in the belief, since there is so little difference in the Cromwell letters and the others, except they grow better as Pope grows older. Elwin speaks of Pope's finally having laid his grand style aside; that is very natural, since a person usually becomes more sane with years. But Elwin admits: "Pope's idleness concurring with good sense and the necessity of business, drove him to quit his gay rhetoric in letter-writing." This improvement with years shows a commonsense mind, which can realize its own needs and develop thereby. In his letter to Steele, July 15, 1712, he writes: "The attraction of the world has not dazzled me very much, and I begin where most people end, with the full conviction of the emptiness of all sorts of ambitions, and the unsatisfying nature of all human pleasures." These are rather deep ideas for a man of twenty-four years and with the opportunity that Pope had had! He continues: "When I reflect what an incon-

siderable little atom every single man is with respect to the whole creation, methinks it is a shame to be concerned at the removal of such a trivial animal as I am. The morning after my exit, the sun will rise as bright as ever, the flowers smell as sweet, the plants spring as green, the world will proceed in its old course, people will laugh as heartily, and marry as fast, as they were used to do."

And to think that these are the words of a man that Lytton Strachey has termed coxcomb, a heinous little monkey, who sits back and laughs at the red hot invectives he ladles out! The above remarks are not only beautiful; they are compendious utterances. The lines recall Lord Bolingbroke's remark to Swift in a letter of November 20, 1717; he says: "He (Pope) will say as much to you in one page as I have said in three." And that, of course, is one of the characteristics of a common sense mind: conciseness, terseness of expression; and this is the goal for which Pope strove. He had said, "A poet fails merely through the misfortune of an ill judgment," and we all know that is true.

No doubt Ralph Allen had some influence in getting Pope's letters published. Leslie Stephen says of Allen, "His princely benevolence and sterling worth were universally admitted." So we have another great character interested in Pope. Allen was so pleased with Pope's correspondence that he sought his acquaintance, and offered to publish a genuine edition of the letters at his own expense. Thus a correspondence started, which lasted from 1736 to 1741. On June 5, 1736, Pope answers: "The letters would leave me, as to my character as a man, just where it is. God knows none of them are my present sentiments, but, on the con-

trary, wholly disapproved by me." Pope had changed with time; he did not want ideas, written in his youth, promulgated now, without corrections, at least. He showed common sense in this; for there are few people who do not change, and often radically, through the flight of years.

But later, after more persuasion, Pope writes: "I am sure, if you thought they would be of any service to virtue, or answer any one good purpose, whether they brought me any credit or not, they should be given to the world: and let them make me a worse writer, provided they could but make one better man." I can not believe that the above words are not sincere! I am more willing to accept Pope's reason for publishing his letters than I am to take Curll's. There is not the least doubt that Pope had a contempt for Curll, and from the remark Curll made on being summoned before the House of Lords for having published some of Pope's letters, I am sure that their dislikes were reciprocal. As Curll was going up to the House, he remarked to a friend, "I am just again going to the Lords to finish Pope."

But he did not finish Pope; it would have taken a smarter man than Curll to finish Pope. Pope made a cat's paw of Curll, and I see no reason why Pope should be calumniated for that. I am sure there are people who enjoy toadying to others, and Curll was a fit subject for such work.

Elwin and Croker say that Pope "kept back every tittle of evidence which would have acquitted him if he was innocent, and have implicated him if he was guilty." This is a sign of sound common sense to keep his business to himself. It takes judgment and sound common sense to be able to keep people from prying into

one's affairs. The world does not need to know every one's affairs, especially if such knowledge has no tendency to better the world.

Curll was evidently trying hard to get Pope's letters into his hands, hoping to make money out of them. Pope appreciated Allen's interest in having his letters published, and he tells him that he will have out every syllable that might give the least offence to any good or serious man. He speaks of Allen's being "so zealous about having" his letters published. So we are assured that Allen is pressing the matter. Pope's biographers would have us believe that Pope, because of modesty, did not like to publish his own letters, but that he pretended to publish in self-defense. I can not imagine Pope, who always seemed so absolutely fearless and disregardful of others' opinions, as being too timid to publish his own letters, even change them, if he so desired. A man certainly has a right to publish and change his own letters just as he has to alter his own poems!

Pope once wrote to Fortescue, to whom he had written through a period of 23 years, from 1720 to 1743, of the affair with Curll, and I feel that he is sincere when he says: "Curll is certainly in it (meaning in the publishing of his letters), but we can get no proof. He has done me another injury in propagating lies in *Fog's Journal* of Saturday last." To Hugh Bethel, with whom he corresponded for 21 years, from 1723 to 1744, he wrote, "I know that you are one of those that will burn every scrap I write to you at my desire, or I really should be precluded from performing the most common offices of friendship, or even writing that I love and esteem any man." Pope shows that he fears that his letters may fall into unfriendly hands.

He seems to be the least bit doubtful of his friends faith and trust. He declares that the world is worth only the few honest people in it.

For some reason Pope has been made to doubt even his friends; Curll's dishonesty and trickery must have been one of the reasons. Of course Pope's common sense would have led him to see that "most friendship is feigning," as Shakespeare has said. He wrote to Mr. Bridges: "For men (let them say what they will) never approve any other's sense, but as it squares with their own." How true this is! People are all more or less narrow-minded when it comes to agreeing with ideas which are foreign to them.

In spite of the fact that Pope has been accused of treating Aaron Hill shamefully, Hill seems to have been one of those whom Pope could trust, and who believed in Pope's common sense. Through a period of eighteen years, from 1720 to 1738, he writes to Pope. In 1720 he says in one of his letters: "Your mind is tempered so divinely, that any mere human weapons have not only failed to pierce, but broke to pieces in rebounding." He speaks of Pope's overcoming "his enemies by detaining their own weapons." He says, "It is a noble triumph you now exercise by the superiority of your nature." And that superiority was due to Pope's sound judgment, his ability to take care of himself, under any and all circumstances. In 1731 we have Hill, after eleven years have passed, writing "The truth is, I loved you so well." Hill is hurt because he thought Pope had used him rather harshly in his *Dunciad*; but again in 1738, after 18 years have passed, Hill says that he can present proof that he knows and respects at his heart Pope's double claim both in morals and genius. This statement does not

show that Hill did not treasure Pope's friendship. If I should hold a friend, one who thought enough of me to keep up a correspondence through 18 years, I would know that I possessed some admirable qualities at least, especially if that friend could express such sentiments as Aaron Hill does. I am sure that Pope's drawing card was common sense, for he wrote to James Craggs, the friend who had remained true through 25 years, "We talk much of fine sense, refined sense, and exalted sense; but for use and happiness, give me a little common sense."

IX

IN HIS POEMS

We now come to the application of Pope's common sense in his poems. Although at times he may have let his spleen get the best of him, we find line after line in Pope's writings which is remarkable for condensation and depth of thought. His fundamental principle in writing was "good sense;" he says the sound should seem an echo to the sense; and it has been said he observed this beyond any other English poet. The dilatory caution of Pope caused him to condense his sentiments, for he allowed a poem to lie by for two years before publication, realizing that the mind is usually enamored by its own productions. He told Spence, "My 'Essay on Criticism' was written in 1709, and published in 1711, which is as little time as ever I let anything lie by me;" the "Rape of the Lock" was written in 1711, and the final copy, which he had improved, was published in 1714. J. W. Mackail said of Pope, "Clarity, precision, good sense are virtues in either," speaking of poetry and prose; and later he adds, "Pope had these." And no doubt Pope's precision was due to his dilatory method mentioned above.

From Dryden Pope discovered the most perfect kind of verse, the heroic couplet, and he habituated himself to this, for which he has been criticized as too uniformly musical and as glutting the ear with unvaried sweetness; but Pope, if the thought meant more to him than method, showed judgment in choosing a pattern and keeping with it. He may not have shown such good

taste by his continuous use of the heroic couplet, but his principle was common sense rather than good taste. He tells us in his "Moral Essays":

"Something there is more needful than expense,
And something previous e'en to taste—'tis sense.
Good sense, which only is the gift of Heaven;
And though no science fairly worth the seven,
A light which in yourself you must perceive."

There is no reason why Pope should not have perceived this light within himself. A man with sound common sense certainly realizes that he possesses it; there is no reason why he should not. Some may scoff and declare such a person has a superiority complex, but I would not prefer a feeling of inferiority; the inferior being never finds his place in the world; but we know that Pope found his place, and an unusual one for a man with so many opposing forces. "Pope was the creature of his own fortunes. Prejudiced in public opinion by his religion, with the disadvantage of obscure birth and an ill-formed body, perpetually harassed by wearing illness, he had won for himself a position which allowed him to mix on equal terms with the noble and powerful, whom men of letters like Dryden, and even Addison, had sought to flatter as patrons." Nothing could have brought him to this pinnacle of fame except his constant ideal: common sense.

Courthope says that Pope has no

"Rich windows, that exclude the light,
And passages that lead to nothing."

Coleridge's aphorism: "Finally, good sense is the Body of poetic genius, Fancy its drapery, Motion its life, and Imagination the soul that is everywhere and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent

whole." Since, according to Coleridge, good sense is the Body, it must be one of the first requisites; of course Pope is not entirely lacking in the other qualities, but his claim is to common sense.

His *Pastorals*, written at 16, were printed in Tonson's "Miscellany" the same year that he wrote the "Essay on Criticism"; he was 21 then. Pope, Congreve, Churchill, Chatterton, and Byron are the most remarkable instances of early authorship; they also died at a rather early age, Pope living longest, with the exception of Congreve, who lived 58 years. Churchill died at the age of 34; "the sleepless boy" committed suicide at 18; and Byron died at 37. Pope's "Essay on Criticism" shows a depth of comprehension beyond his years; the thoughts are equal to those of a person of experience. He wrote his "Temple of Fame" while he was 22, an early time of life for so much learning and so much observation as that work exhibits." He began his *Iliad* in his twenty-fifth year, in 1712, and completed it in his thirtieth year; it was published in 1720. There was something which drove Pope on to accomplish all this work in spite of poor health. Think of it! In 1719 he writes to Caryll: "I have perpetual vomitings and nervous distempers upon me, with a dejection of spirits that has totally taken away everything, if I ever had anything, which could be called vivacity or cheerfulness." It was Pope's practical judgment that did not allow him to succumb to his morbid dejection. He was determined to "carry on." In the *Dunciad* he says:

"Some demon stole my pen (forgive the offence)
And once betrayed me into common sense:
Else all my prose and verse were much the same."

He, as few others, knew

“True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.”

Art to Pope meant the ability to make man feel countless sensations. He did not care to cause a passive reaction to his works; he wanted to arouse man to thought and to action. He says in his “Imitations of Horace:”

“Let me for once presume to instruct the times
To know the poet from the man of rhyme:
'Tis he who gives my breast a thousand pains,
Can make me feel each passion that he feigns.”

In the same poem he tells us to “show no mercy to an empty line.” Beauty of form and language meant something to Pope; the throbbing life of the lines meant everything!

Pope also objected to long descriptions. He said: “It is a great fault to describe everything. The good ancients (meaning Virgil) have no long descriptions: commonly not above ten lines, and scarce ever thirty.” Pope knew that flights of beautiful and glowing descriptions are not the marks of common sense, but rather the ostentatious display of an artist's ability. He knew that long descriptions fill pages noted for their artistry, but with perhaps little sound reasoning. He says in his “Moral Essays:”

“Soft were my numbers: who could take offence
While pure description held the place of sense?”

As Pope says, who could take offence at pure description? Description never jars the mind, never

causes a mental reaction, never demands anything but a passive acquiescence; therefore it provokes so little thought that no one would think of being offended by it. Pope preferred to

“Hear Bethel’s sermon, one not versed in schools,²
But strong in sense, and wise without the rules.”

Pope always liked to give the schools a thrust. That was natural since, purely from a religious prejudice, he had been debarred from them; he also came to realize that he had surpassed, in more ways than one, men who had had ten opportunities to his one. He seemed to fail to see that colleges do not pretend to make wise people of fools, but I feel we must agree with Pope that there are no schools for geniuses, neither colleges nor universities. It is only the “common mind” that educational methods can reach; geniuses have always rebelled at red-tape and set rules; they resent being run through college mills. Pope says:³

“ ’Tis education forms the common mind:
Just as the twig is bent, the tree’s inclined.”

Notice that Pope says the “common mind,” and he thinks it is easily bent; not so the mind of a person who thinks for himself; he may appear to submit and all the while be forming conclusions just opposite to those propounded to him. Passive submission and willingness to pass through a mill with people who do not care to think for themselves is certainly not the attitude of a common-sense mind.

Many men who have gone through the horrors of

²Imitations of Horace.

³Moral Essays.

war, refuse to go back to college and take all the prescribed subjects. They feel that if they do the paying, or their government does, then they should be allowed to do the choosing of their subjects. The enthusiasm of a beginning student can be dampened, if not killed, by the time he has gone through all the red tape of prescribed subjects. When I received my Master's degree, my second degree, I decided that others had told me enough of what I had to study to become educated. Some of the professors commended me for having a mind of my own. I then launched out on a writing career, through which I have learned more of life and of people than I ever learned in any one prescribed subject, for I have never used many of them.

Though I am thankful that I had the opportunity of going to college and of learning many facts (some of which I never use), I wonder if I shall ever have the influence that Pope has had, even though schools were denied him. We are reminded, "Where there is a will, there is a way." Pope made his way because of a will, guided by common sense.

How Pope resented the egoism of the man in power! It is well that the colleges were closed to him. I wonder if he would have borne their hard and fast red-tape rules! In his "Imitations of Horace" he has a lord cry:

"For a rogue in need
To have a taste, is insolence indeed!"

Again I say, "How well Pope knew human nature!" Any person in authority, mental or temporal, thinks it insolence on the part of the one beneath him to have an idea; yet, there has been instance after instance of the simple confounding the great. The Master said, "A little child shall lead them." Pope certainly con-

founded some of the supposedly great of his day, and even scholars are studying him to-day! How Pope resented this seeming infallibility of the one power! Shakespeare has proved to us that his fools often showed more judgment than those who imagined themselves authorities.

Authorities! I wonder how many hate the word, because there are so many people claiming to be authorities on this or that? There is always someone ready to set himself up as an authority! And there can be authorities along so many lines, one of them may be an authority on squirting tobacco juice through a hole. I wonder if others have a contempt for the word "authority" that I have. When someone boasts of being an authority, I visualize a big fat Negro cook, a woman, who is an authority on making biscuits. What of it? There are people who live and die that never ate a biscuit, much less a light fluffy one! And those professors who taught me in the University and considered themselves authorities, are many of them lying under the sod, where all of us must lie, unless our ashes are scattered to the winds. How we need common sense!

Pope resented the schools as he did certain unreasonable doctrines of his church. In a poem to Lady Montagu he writes;

"Impertinent schools,
 With musty dull rules,
 Have reading to females denied.
 So papists refuse,
 The Bible to use,
 Lest flocks should be as wise as their guides."

There are many people who would fail to get all the

*Subversive
 Racist
 Pretend that
 she like
 negroes but...*

significance of these lines. Yes, the schools are impertinent, with their dull rules, and which were not opened to women until Darwin discovered that we all came from monkeys; then all monkeys, male and female, about 1850, were allowed to attend schools. And of course Pope knew how the Catholic Popes tried to keep the laity in ignorance, so the rabble could not read and understand the Bible for themselves. If educated, the laity might refuse to follow blind guides.

Pope knew, too, that everyone with a degree was not necessarily learned. Though he was not allowed to attend public schools, after he had won fame and a name, the schools offered to "Doctor" him. He laughed at them and advised them to "doctor" some one that really deserved doctoring. I am sure any practical, commonsense mind would resent our "impertinent schools," who put their stamp of approval on inefficient as well as efficient, and who reward mediocrity more often than efficiency. In his "Essay on Criticism" Pope says:

"Some are bewildered in the maze of schools,
And some made coxcombs nature meant but fools.
In search of wit these lost their common sense."

Oh, how true every line of this is! There is no mind that is not bewildered in our maze of schools, and the little mind is overwhelmed, ready to believe anything.

Pope shows a common sense mind in his attitude toward people who worship the rich and the ancient. We abhor the ancestor worship of China, failing to see that we take part in forms of ancestor worship. There is, as Pope says, a form of ancestor worship in our regard for ancient authors. He says:

“Authors, like coins, grow dear as they grow old;
It is the rust we value, not the gold.”

Most authors are ignored while they are alive. Pope is one exception. Through his sound reasoning he made himself known while he lived. But he asks:

“What is fame? The meanest have their day:
The greatest can but blaze, and pass away.”

In the same poem Pope resents the difficulty that a new poet has in gaining recognition. He says that if he should ask if a weed grew on Avon, our fathers would rise up in rage and swear all shame is lost. But we wonder if many worshipers of Shakespeare are not merely pretenders; they open wide eyes if anyone speaks against him, but they, no doubt, would not recognize, much less quote, his lines.

Pope resented this same worship of the rich and powerful. He says in his “Essay on Criticism:”

“But let a lord once own the happy lines,
How the wit brightens! how the style refines!
Before his sacred name flies every fault,
And each exalted stanza teems with thought!”

This is too often true! People can imagine hair growing on a bald-headed man if he be rich or a lord. Pope, even before he was wealthy, had sense enough to cause people to realize that his lines “teem with thought.” He played on the credulity and egotism of the rich by allowing them to imagine that he was deferring to them. He once read some of his lines to Lord Hallifax and the latter objected to them. Garth advised Pope to leave them as they were and read

them to him later. Pope took the advice; Lord Hallifax cried, "Ay, now, Pope, they are perfectly right! Nothing can be better!" Pope was so disgusted that he refused to bargain with the Lord to write praises of him for an inferred donation.

Pope, as Warburton says, never flattered anybody for money. A knave to him was a knave in every state.⁵ He laughs at sycophants who write for financial gain in the name of charity.

"Then better sure it charity becomes
To tax directors, who (thank God) have plums."⁶

But Pope did not care enough for Lord Hallifax's "plums" to write praise of him. In the "Epilogue to the Satires" he writes:

"But random praise—the task can ne'er be done:
Each mother asks it for her booby son."

What logic, what sense in these lines! "Every crow thinks her crow the blackest." Few of us can realize our own faults and habits which may be obnoxious and detestable to others.

"And each blasphemer quite escape the rod,⁷
Because the insult's not on man, but God."

This is the way we shift the blame; if we are accused, we lay the blame to our nature, the gift of God. It is

⁵The Dunciad.

⁶Epilogue to the Satires.

⁷Epilogue to the Satires.

the nature of man, most of them at least, to try to prove an alibi. But Pope says:

“I scarce can think him (man) such a worthless
thing,
Unless he praise some monster for a king;
Or virtue, or religion turn to sport,⁸
To please a lewd or unbelieving court.”

In spite of the fact that Pope has been accused of insincerity, the above lines show anything but a lack of sincerity. They seem expressions straight from the heart, fruits of a common-sense mind.

In his “Essay on Man” Pope makes an attack on science; he, as early as he lived, when little had been said about science in comparison to what we now hear of it, saw that its promoters were presumptuous enough to feel its superiority and infallibility. In speaking of the Indian, he says that “his soul proud science never taught to stray.” Pope realized, even then, that science would cause men’s souls “to stray,” groping about in a sea of doubt and attempts to prove everything. He tells the scientist or the poet who likes to rave over the beauties of nature:

“Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.”

Studying nature will not teach us how to improve man; scientific discoveries and raptures of natural beauty may improve man’s conditions and do nothing for man’s souls. He tells those men, who look about, poking their noses into every nook and cranny, delving deeper and deeper into scientific wonders, to “mount

⁸Imitations of Horace.

where science guides" and "try to regulate the sun," and "attempt to imitate God,"

"Then drop into thyself, and be a fool!"

As Newton lived from 1642 to 1727, he was one of Pope's contemporaries. Pope speaks of showing "Newton as we show an ape." In his "The Design" to his "Essay on Man," speaking of the disputes on science, he declares: "I will venture to say they have less sharpened the wits than the hearts of men against each other, and have diminished the practice more than advanced the theory of morality." He had common sense enough to see the fight that would necessarily take place between science and religion. It is utterly absurd to declare there is no fight, for science and religion teach two divergent doctrines. Pope asks:

"What makes all physical or moral ill?

There deviates nature, and here wanders will.

God sends not ill, if rightly understood."

And from the last line we see what he means by his "Whatever is, is right." It is right because God wills it; and if we understand, we realize the right of a thing.

As to their being no fight between science and religion: science declares that proof is everything; religion teaches that faith has most power; science tries to prove that man descended from a lower form of life, the monkey in advance (and that is easy to believe when looking at some people); Christ teaches that God created the heavens and the earth, and it took seven days. But of course the days could have been reckoned differently from our days of twenty-four hours. But why quibble? Will anyone ever prove that

he had monkey ancestors? If so, it is not so much what our ancestors did as what we, today, may accomplish.

→ To me, no man possesses common sense that does not believe in a Supreme Being. That line, "God sends not ill, if rightly understood", is a thing that atheists use to try to prove that God is not just; for a just God would not allow His people to suffer as many of them have to suffer. The atheists fail to see that man brings all the ills upon himself as well as upon others that have to suffer, though innocent, because of man's injustice, selfishness, greed, and dozens of other sins. Just because a person hasn't common sense enough to understand a thing, there is little reason for his denying that others understand and believe.

There are few subjects concerning man that Pope does not consider. He tells us that "an honest man's the noblest work of God."⁹ He therefore shows common sense in dealing with what he considers the most important thing God created.

Pope wrote his *Dunciad* in 1726, showing how dullness rules in man. In 1729 Walpole presented a copy to George II. Now in "Windsor Forest" Pope prays that peace may come, slavery may cease, and that "in brazen bonds shall barbarous discord dwell." He always hated discord if he had to be in the center of the riot. He could sit back and laugh if an onlooker. But when his *Dunciad* burst like a bombshell among his contemporary poets, who became an angry mob, causing the publishers to fear publication of the poem, Pope saw that he must needs use sound judgment if he worked himself out of his seeming forced subjection to the will of the storming, raging people. He feared prosecution

⁹Essay on Man.

for libel. Courthope says: "There was Genius, Vanity, Spleen, and Suspicion on Pope's side; Failure, Envy, and Malignity on the side of his enemies." It may have been base in Pope to have fun at some one else's expense, but he was influenced by Swift to have his "Dullness" published, as the *Dunciad* was at first called. So Pope was not to be outdone by the howling mob; he determined to have the poem published. He prevailed upon three peers, Lord Bathurst, Earl of Oxford, and Earl of Burlington, to act as his nominal publishers. Since the report quickly spread that the poem was the property of rich and powerful noblemen, the dunces feared to take any legal action. Few would have thought of it and few could have accomplished this scheme! The action shows Pope's ability to manage his own affairs, and his determination to see his work through.

And it was all due to Swift that the *Dunciad* was published. Swift was entertained in 1726 at Twickenham, for a period of four months. While he was there, Pope started to condemn the rough draft of the *Dunciad* to the fire, when Swift, snatching it back, urged Pope to proceed with it. In 1727 Swift had returned to Ireland, after a second visit to Twickenham; Pope sent him four lines of the inscription to arouse his curiosity; later Swift read all the manuscript, then called "Dullness." In 1727 he wrote to Gay, "Why does not Mr. Pope publish his "Dullness?"

There is no wonder that Pope was eager to have the poem published! But it is a wonder that the *Dunciad*, representing merely a quarrel between authors, should still be able to excite a reader's interest. Its name at least is known in every European country; and in England, even to-day, these obscure heroes, dead for almost two centuries, still entertain the imagination.

One cause of interest is Pope's ability to manage a precarious situation. Pope had self-love to urge the Lords as publishers, and "reason to restrain" the mob. He knew that he was not living in an age when he could say:

"Oh, happy state! when souls each other draw,
When love is liberty, and nature law."¹⁰

In the poem he speaks of "factions roaring in hell," and he had judgment enough to know that the angry mob who had assailed his publishers were fit subjects for hell. But he used their own doctrine to confound them; he made the Lords, whom he knew they would knuckle to, his publishers. The din ceased. The mob bowed to power and wealth. But Pope becomes

"Now sick alike of envy and praise."¹¹

For after all what is fame?

"All that we feel of it begins and ends
In the small circle of our foes and friends."¹²

Pope is tired of the pomp and show; he longs for the solitude of former days. He writes:

"Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented, let me die,
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie."¹³

¹⁰Eloisa to Ebelard.

¹¹Imitations of Horace.

¹²Essay on Man.

¹³Ode on Solitude.

Pope, however, should have known that his common-sense ideas would never allow him to be forgotten entirely. It is true he has not been shown the proper respect with regard to his home and property. Twickenham was "destroyed in the beginning of the nineteenth century; and, according to Horace Walpole, the garden had been previously spoilt." His grotto at Twickenham still remains. This neglect is only a sign of man's ingratitude; but this ingratitude, however, does not lessen the fact that Pope was "the prophet of common sense," as Edmunds terms him and worthy of the praise Swift gives him in these lines:

"In Pope I can not read a line,
But with a sigh I wish it mine;
When he can in one couplet fix
More sense than I can do in six."

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